PHOEBE MARSHALL

SOMEWHERE IN CANADA

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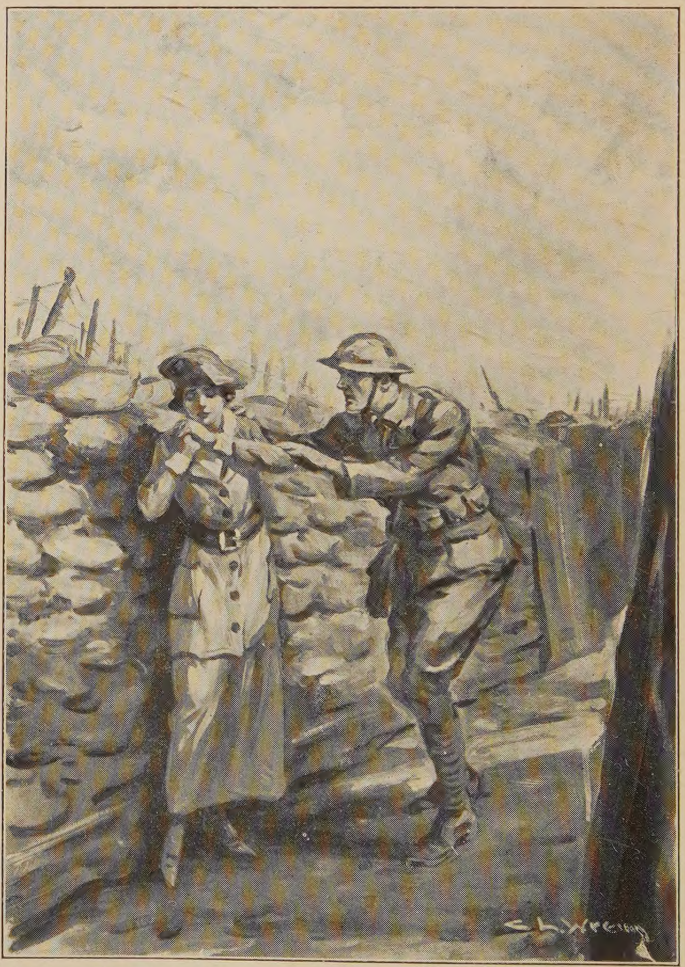

It was Lucky who discovered her a few minutes later.
(Page 55) Frontispiece

PHŒBE MARSHAL

SOMEWHERE IN CANADA

BY

MARTHA TRENT

ILLUSTRATED BY

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NEW YORK

BARSE & HOPKINS

PUBLISHERS

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DEDICATED TO

A. P. H.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	A Corner of Canada	9
II	New Arrivals	23
III	Laughter and Memories	31
IV	Jean's Warning	41
V	Tommy Bunce	52
VI	A Supper Party	60
VII	A Voice in the Dark	69
VIII	Brother Ballou	80
IX	An Unsolved Mystery	91
X	Phœbe Remembers	106
XI	Lucky Plans a Surprise Party	117
XII	The Surprise Party	128
XIII	Old Smoke's Prophecy	139
XIV	Good-bys	149
XV	The Letters	160
XVI	To France	169
XVII	Unidentified	180
XVIII	Jacques Leval	191
XIX	Missing	201
XX	Old Smoke's Prophecy Fulfilled	209
XXI	Conclusion	219

ILLUSTRATIONS

It was Lucky who discovered her a few minutes later . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

He leaned from his saddle and in an instant Nancy was safe in front of him 32

"Jean!" Phœbe was so shocked that she could barely say the name 92

Very swiftly one of the planes fell 186

PHŒBE MARSHAL

CHAPTER I

A CORNER OF CANADA

OLD SMOKE stopped and looked; then she changed her yellow corn-cob pipe from one corner of her toothless mouth to the other. To say that she was startled would be to exaggerate. Indian women of ninety years are seldom startled, and Old Smoke, besides being ninety, was the daughter of a long line of silent Big Chiefs. The last of the line, to be sure, but she felt her responsibility and would have scorned to show any sign of emotion.

But the sight of a hammock swung between two gaunt pines, unprotected from the wind, at this season of the year was enough to make even Old Smoke stop and stare. Surely the ways of the white women were strange.

The oozing of the thick slimy mud beneath her worn moccasins interrupted her musings; she changed her pipe back to its usual corner, grunted her disapproval and trudged on toward the cluster of huts in sight an eighth of a mile down the road.

Meanwhile the occupant of the hammock, unconscious of being observed, opened a pair of tired eyes, darker by many shades than the pale blue sky above, closed them again and struggled back to sleep.

Sleep did not always mean rest to Phœbe Marshal. Her dreams were all too often haunted by the fears and terrors that during waking hours her courageous will refused to let her consider.

To-day something in the air, perhaps it was the first promise of spring in the still, blustering wind, or the smell of the earth as the sun drew some of the cruel frost from it, made the tired lines in her face relax. The hammock swung gently to and fro, and she slept.

When next she opened her eyes the sun was

directly above her. From where she lay she could see almost all of the little village of Billancourt. A single muddy road led to it from the railroad station ten miles away. It was the road along which Old Smoke had trudged, and it ended in the Indian settlement where two thirds of the inhabitants of the village lived in dirty huts. Beyond the huts and occupying a little rise of ground, as if it scorned to stay on the same level with its humbler neighbors, was the immaculate white house of Rab Mewhinney, the Factor of the trading post.

Phœbe looked at it and smiled.

"Dear old cross patch," she said aloud, as her thoughts dwelt affectionately on the old Scotchman whose gruff, though kindly, manner endeared him to all who knew him.

To the right and away from the main road a tiny lake sparkled through the trees, and on its banks the low red roof of the lodge, famous once for hunting parties, and now a snug convalescent hospital for Canadian soldiers, was visible.

As Phœbe looked at it, some of the tired lines

returned to her face. She had been sent up from Montreal months before to take charge with the promise that other helpers would follow, but spring found her still alone, except for the able aid of Mrs. Wing, her old housekeeper. None of her patients were seriously ill, but they all were in need of constant cheering. Many of them would never recover. Phœbe sighed as she thought of their pluck.

Then suddenly she laughed; a comical figure in a very dirty khaki suit, high boots and fur cap was coming toward her. He was hurrying as fast as his wounded hip would permit and he was singing.

Phœbe listened and laughed again.

> "Keep those home fires to burning,
> Though the heart is yearning,
> Those lads so brave—"

The singing suddenly stopped, and Jean, cap in hand, stood grinning before her.

"Mam'selle, why you laugh; why everybody laugh when Jean sing the English song?" he inquired.

"I don't know, Jean," Phœbe confessed, "unless it makes everybody happy."

Jean seemed to consider. "*Bien,* if that is the reason then I am no longer cross; but that Alfred, I think he laugh for a different reason."

"Is everything all right at the house?" Phœbe asked. It was never wise to let Jean's thoughts dwell for any length of time on Alfred, a big chap from Vancover, who delighted in teasing the little "Canuck."

"Oh, yes, Old Bill he grumble like everything when the so fat Madam Wing give him his soup but," he shrugged his thin shoulders expressively, "when the time come that Old Bill does not be cross then it will mean he is dead and when that time come I, Jean, will be very sad."

Phœbe got out of the hammock, stretched, yawned and picked up the gaudy-colored Indian blanket that had covered her.

"Old Bill is not going to die," she said seriously, as she started for the house. "He is going to get well; the last time the doctor was here he said he would even be able to walk some day."

"Walk! Poof! What good will that do him?" Jean demanded. "Old Bill wants to fight again. The doctor does not know everything," he added significantly.

By this time they had reached the lodge, and Phœbe turned to go up the few steps that led to the broad, glass-enclosed veranda.

"Jean, I do wish you would not change your mood so often," she said seriously. "One minute you are singing and the very next you are so gloomy that you make me gloomy too."

Again Jean shrugged his shoulders but now he laughed. "That is Jean," he said simply. "Half French, half English; half gay, half serious. It is the same thing."

"Perhaps," Phœbe nodded, and continued her way into the house. As she opened the door, a sudden and guilty silence fell over the twenty men whose cots lined both sides of the broad veranda.

She stopped beside Old Bill's bed and leveled an accusing finger at the men.

"What were you all talking about?" she de-

manded, smiling. "Something you knew would make me cross, I suppose. Harry, were you telling about that last fight of yours in the shell hole? Because if you were, I will certainly have your cot put out in the woodshed all by itself."

Harry, the boy, that she addressed, for he was no more than a boy, grinned sheepishly and shook his head vigorously.

"No, miss; wasn't I that was talking at all, miss," he protested. "Hope to die if I was, miss."

Phœbe laughed softly and patted his hand, a very thin, very white hand.

"All right, Harry," she said; "but if it wasn't you, who was it?"

"Twasn't nothin' at all, miss," Alfred's deep voice assured her. "Just a bit of—of fun, you know." He hesitated, and the rest looked at him reproachfully.

"Oh, well, if it was only a bit of fun I'll forgive you," Phœbe laughed, and went on into the house to consult with the kindly Mrs. Wing.

When the last faint rustle of her white skirt

disappeared, the conversation on the veranda was resumed.

Old Bill was the first to speak:

"Bless her little heart," he said gruffly. "Always smiling, when you know her heart's about to break. There weren't no call for you to say 'twas a bit of a joke we was talking of, Alf," he finished reproachfully.

Alfred looked troubled. "I couldn't think of anything else," he apologized. "Honest I couldn't, and we couldn't tell her."

"Alf did just right," Larry, a big fair haired American, spoke up. "Tell her it's a joke and she stops worrying; act mysterious and she thinks Harry there has been getting himself all feverish again or Old Bill's found something else to growl about."

"Well, what did happen to her brother anyway?" a thin, pipy voice from the far end of the room demanded. "I ain't been here long and I never did know."

"No, nor never will." Old Bill, always the

story-teller, took up the tale where Phœbe had interrupted it.

"Nobody knows, and it looks mighty like nobody ever would again. He went up in his plane one morning—it wasn't a very clear day—and no one's ever seen him since. Nobody saw him fall; he just disappeared into a cloud." Old Bill paused to give weight to his words.

"Poor kid, no wonder she gets that worried look now and again," Larry said feelingly. "If she knew he was dead she'd feel more peaceful about it, I guess."

"Same as her other brother," Alf nodded. "He was killed proper and buried."

"It beats all," Harry unconsciously voiced the thought in every mind, "why a thing like that should happen to a girl like her. Now, why couldn't I have gone in his place, when I was in that shell—"

Four pillows, well aimed, muffled the remainder of the sentence, and two, not so well aimed, fell on the floor beside his bed.

Upon this impromptu pillow fight the door opened, and Nancy poked in her head.

The very sight of Nancy's head was enough to dispel the gloomiest thoughts, and her smile made even the memory of them fade. It was a tousled little head, covered by a tangled mop of dark auburn hair. Two impish brown eyes, lit with tiny glints of gold, danced a saucy defiance to anything even suggesting seriousness. Her nose, covered winter and summer with big gold freckles, turned up impertinently. Her mouth was crooked; one side of it was always smiling. When Nancy walked, she suggested spritely elves and fairies.

She was Rab Mewhinney's granddaughter, but since she had been five years old he had tried to be father, mother and brothers and sisters to her. They lived together in the big white house with only an old Indian woman to take care of them.

Everybody loved Nancy, even the Indians, and everybody tried to spoil her, but so far no one had succeeded. Just now the Canadian Army was joining its efforts to the rest.

At the sight of the pillows, Nancy shouted with delight.

"What's up?" she demanded. "Whatever did you say, Harry?"

"Something Nurse Marshal told him not to," Alf explained.

"Oh, I know. Shell holes." Nancy looked very wise. "You really mustn't, you know," she continued, as she set to work pulling the pillows away from Harry and returning them to their rightful owners. "It's no end bad for you," she wrinkled up her nose. "I don't know why, but Phœbe said something about fits."

Harry tried to look indignant, but after a short minute he joined the laugh that followed Nancy's warning.

When the laughter subsided, Nancy danced over to Old Bill—her favorite among the men—perched herself on the end of his bed, folded her hands and tried to look mysterious.

"I know something," she announced importantly.

"Tell us," several voices demanded.

"Granddaddy's mad—madder than I've ever seen him, and I've been seeing him for a long time."

"What at?"

"I don't know. I asked him, but he said it was something little girls wouldn't understand." She sniffed scornfully. "That's how I know he's really mad. He always says that when the Indians do something he doesn't like. Of course it's silly of him to say all that about little girls, because usually I know he's going to be mad before he does," she added triumphantly.

"Do you know this time?" Alfred inquired.

Nancy thought for a minute. "No, I don't," she said slowly, "unless it's the new man that came to the store yesterday. He was talking to Fire and Water—"

"To who?" Larry demanded, sitting up in bed.

"Don't you know who Fire and Water are?" Nancy inquired pityingly.

Several heads, shaken in unison, answered her question.

"They are two of our very best hunters," she

explained. "They bring home lots more skins than any of the others, but they are both very bad. Granddaddy says 'he canna thole them,' and when he says that it means they're pretty bad. It's Scotch you know, and Granddaddy only says things in Scotch when he's very angry indeed. Fire and Water, of course, are not their real names. Somebody called them that because they both like to drink that brown stuff that's called firewater and makes them act so dreadfully. They are very disagreeable, and they never speak except in grunts if they can help themselves; that's the reason I was so surprised when I saw them really talking to that fat man at the store yesterday."

There was a silence. Nancy hummed a little tune, then Old Bill said:

"But just what did make your granddaddy mad?"

It took time to trace back through Nancy's flights of fancy to the original subject.

"Oh, I don't know," Nancy replied indifferently, for a new idea had captured her butterfly

brain. She climbed down from the bed, and without another word, ran down the steps, across the lawn, to the edge of the lake, where Jean was feeding a tiny, brown cinnamon bear.

CHAPTER II

NEW ARRIVALS

NANCY did not call out to Jean. She slipped up softly, as an Indian, behind him and nearly frightened him out of his wits by whispering "JEAN" in his ear.

"Spirit of fairies, what do you want?"

It was always his gayest mood that Nancy called out to meet her own. The strange, comical Jean and she were the best of friends. It was she whom he confided in, four years before, when he made the mighty decision to join the army and fight in France—a decision that was thought utterly uncalled for by most of the men in Billancourt, for the little village was settled, except for the Indians, by French Canadians, who were content to let the responsibility of the war fall from their careless shoulders with a shrug as something apart from them and in which they had no interest.

Four years had seen many changes. Other men had followed Jean's example, but he had been the first; and when he returned with a bad wound, Nancy had been wild with delight at having her old playfellow back, and they took up the threads of their strange friendship exactly where they had dropped them.

"I want to know what you are feeding Brother Ballou and where you have been all day and who the new man is at the store and what was in the yellow letter that you carried home from the station this morning," Nancy replied, without stopping for breath.

Jean straightened up, and a look of horror came over his face. He thrust his hand into the torn pocket of his coat and pulled out a crumpled telegram.

"Whatever is the matter?" Nancy demanded, mystified. "You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Chicken head that I am!" Jean raved. "See what my silliness has done!" He flourished the envelope. "I took it to her there in the hammock,

and because I must talk some of my foolishness and sing—yes, that was it, I was singing—I forget to give it to her. Never again will I sing; I swear it!" He looked very heroic as he spoke, then his face fell and he inquired sheepishly, "What shall I do?"

"You will give it to me this second," Nancy replied. "You are a great silly, but I will give it to Phœbe myself, and ask her not to be too cross with you. Why," she added, as Jean gave her the telegram and she glanced at the address, "this is not for Phœbe; it is for Pierre, the station master."

"No," Jean denied emphatically, "it is for her. Pierre himself gave it to me."

"Well, I'll take it to her now, and then we'll know all about it."

Nancy returned to the house and entered the big kitchen. Phœbe was explaining something with infinite patience to an Indian, who, to judge by her sullen expression, was not paying very much attention to her. She looked up with relief and a smile of welcome as she saw Nancy.

With grave importance—so grave, in fact, that the impish light in her eyes fairly shone—she handed the telegram to Phœbe.

"Jean forgot to give you this. Pierre gave it to him early this morning, but you are please not to be too angry with him," she explained, and turned her attentions to the Indian woman.

"Girl-afraid-of-her-shadow," she said in a sing-song voice, never looking at the woman but speaking past her to one of the pots on the stove. "Daughter of Old-Smoke-her-pipe does not listen to brave Miss Marshal. Soon Miss Marshal send off girl, and Sunflower come. Then no more money; no more tobacco for Old Smoke's pipe. Old Smoke's hand big; Old Smoke hit hard."

Nancy stopped and, quite as though the Indian had not been there, she turned to Phœbe, who had waited for her to finish. She knew she would have no more trouble with her cook.

"It's very exciting news, Nancy," she said, holding out the telegram. "I don't just know why Pierre sent it to me. Your granddaddy is

the one to hear about it. The Mounted Police are coming and they are bringing a lot of men in the Tank Corps. They will camp here for a little while. I am sure I don't know why they are coming here, but it will cheer the boys up to see some new faces, so I am glad."

"The ways of the army are verra strange, lassie; be wise and dinna try to understand them." Nancy imitated her grandfather's manner of speech so well that even the Indian woman smiled. Phœbe laughed heartily.

"Nancy, you little imp, you! What would we do if you were not here to keep us in good spirits? Come along and we'll go and talk it over with Mr. Mewhinney."

Nancy nodded, and together they started for the Factor's house. On the way they crossed an old road, so overgrown with weeds that the outline was almost gone. It ran east from the village, and seemed to lose itself in a tangle of undergrowth.

"Where does that road lead to?" Phœbe asked idly. "Some day when I have time I am going

to follow it and see what happens. It looks mysterious."

"Well, it's not,"—Nancy laughed. "Jean and I have walked there lots of times; never quite to the end, but almost. It reaches the coast, that's all."

"'That's all,'" Phœbe mimicked; "and isn't that exciting enough for you? It would be for me. I'll certainly have to go some day. I think it would blow all the cobwebs out of my brain to see the waves dashing on the shore. Is it very far?"

"Fifteen Indian miles," Nancy replied; "and that means about twenty Christian miles. as Granddaddy would say."

"It might be worth it," Phœbe said, more to herself than to her companion, and she looked wistfully in the direction of the coast.

When they reached the first Indian huts, they quickened their steps. The Factor was just coming out of his front gate as they came up.

"Well, my lassies, what brings you here? I was just comin' doon to see you, Miss Phœbe, and

to inquire about young Harry. The lad worries me; he doesna seem to mend," he said, as he shook Phœbe's hand.

"He's better to-day, I think," she assured him. "But do go and talk to him, if you have a chance. Tell him about the Indians—anything to keep his mind from dwelling on his awful memories. Here's a wire that Pierre sent up for me to read. There's nothing I can do about it, but I thought it might interest you."

The Factor read the message slowly. "So we're to have a bit of excitement! Weel, I'll not say I'm sorry. It will do you a world of good, lass, to see some cheerful, strong men about. Nancy and I will do what we can for the officers."

Nancy danced with excitement. "Granddaddy, do you mean we can have them at the house? Oh, what a lark! I'll go this very minute and get things ready. Do you think Barney will be with them?"

The Factor chuckled. "Just hear her! The lass thinks there's but one sergeant in the Canadian Mounted Police."

Phœbe laughed. "I don't blame her. Barney's a darling. If I thought he were coming, I'd be excited too."

"Listen!" Nancy pointed down the road. Nothing was visible, but off in the distance the sound of horses' hoofs came to them faintly.

"Losh, child, 'tis they coming now!" the Factor exclaimed. "Hurry into the house and tell Moonflower. Miss Phœbe and I will go down the road a bit to meet them."

Nancy darted up the path, gave orders to the surprised Indian girl, who was squatting on the kitchen floor, and was back in the road before the men were in sight.

"Here they are!" she shouted, as a single horse and rider galloped into sight. Both were covered with mud, and the horse was throwing his head angrily and snorting.

CHAPTER III

LAUGHTER AND MEMORIES

PHŒBE caught her breath, for it looked as though the rider were doomed to a bad fall. Nancy's keen ear detected another sound.

"What's that rumble?" she asked excitedly. "And oh, Granddaddy, that's Barney, and the Queen's running away with him!"

Without another word she started running down the road, at top speed. To the two watching, it looked as though she would be trampled under the horse's hoofs the next second, but they reckoned without knowledge of Sergeant Barney P. Harding's horsemanship. Like some huge bird that swoops to earth for its prey, he leaned from his saddle and in an instant Nancy was safe in front of him. The Queen, his coal-black horse, slowed up in obedience to his command, and al-

most before Phœbe and Rab Mewhinney had time to be frightened he was standing beside them, Nancy perched on his shoulder.

"Barney,"—Phœbe was the first to speak—"when I recover from the horrible fright you have just given me, I am going to tell you exactly what I think of you!" she exclaimed. She was between laughter and tears; no one ever succeeded in being angry with Barney.

"My dear young lady, I will listen to you with the greatest of pleasure." Barney had the most charming smile in the world, and the manners of a king and a true Irishman.

"And now, me darlin',"—he swung Nancy gently to the ground—"I've got a surprise for you. Here it comes!" He pointed down the road, and all his listeners' eyes opened wide in wonder.

Giant caterpillars, battleship gray and spattered with mud, crawled toward them. They kept the center of the road, while along the edge the frightened horses of the Mounted Police reared and cavorted, as if they were trying to imitate the

He leaned from his saddle and in an instant Nancy was safe in front of him.

queer antics of these new and alarming creatures.

Rab Mewhinney, the man, looked at them in silent admiration, but it was the Factor, who knew the very thoughts of his Indians, that spoke.

"Barney, my lad, if you dinna want an Indian uprising, stop those creatures from crawling any further and give me time to warn my children that they are coming! The sight of one of them is bad enough, and they"—he nodded his head toward the settlement—"have been very restless for the last couple of days."

Barney saluted. "I understand, sir, I'll speak to Captain Struthers about it, sir." He remounted his horse and trotted off, while the Factor hurried away in the opposite direction.

Phœbe and Nancy watched the tanks slow up and finally stop, as Barney raised his hand. An officer stepped from a little door of the first one, and for a minute he and the trooper talked. Then a laugh, rich and full, came to them.

Nancy joined her shrill little giggle to it, but Phœbe caught her breath and turned very white.

"Phil,"—she hardly did more than breathe the

word. Then because Barney and the officer were coming toward them, she gave herself a little shake, squared her shoulders and blinked back the tears that had come to her eyes. When Captain Struthers held out his long brown hand in acknowledgment of Barney's flowery introduction, she was once more the self-possessed Phœbe.

"How do you do, Captain?" She laughed a little to cover her nervousness. "Mr. Mewhinney was here to meet you, but he thought that he had better go and warn his Indians of those extraordinary monsters. They'll never believe they're not alive, and they may do most anything when they see them. Mr. Mewhinney left me to welcome you to Billancourt," she finished, smiling.

"That will be something more for me to thank him for when we meet." The pretty compliment was out before Captain Struthers had made up his mind what to say, and it startled him. He was not in the habit of saying flattering things; in fact, he had always scorned the idea. Compliments were all right in their way, and of course he knew girls, especially pretty girls, expected

them; but he was just a plain man and a rough soldier, and he had no time for such nonsense. He looked reproachfully at the smiling Barney and decided to lay the blame on his broad shoulders, or rather on one of them, for Nancy occupied the other, and it was from this exalted height that she spoke.

"Please, Captain Struthers, will you let me ride in one of those guns?" she asked, in her most wheedling tones. "Barney would, if they belonged to him; wouldn't you, Barney?"

Again Captain Struthers laughed. This time Phœbe was expecting it, but she turned a shade whiter none the less.

"Well, I certainly can't let Sergeant Harding get ahead of me," he said. "You shall ride in any tank that suits your fancy and as often as you please."

With a nod to Phœbe, he turned toward his men and gave orders for them to leave their tanks and await further orders. The Factor soon returned. He looked worried.

"It seems they knew about them all the time,"

he told Phœbe, "and in spite of all I could say to them they will have it that the world is coming to an end." His expression changed from worry to anger. "If I could find the man that's been putting such notions into their heads, I'd throttle him."

Nancy, still on Barney's shoulder, nodded her small head. "I know who it was, Granddaddy," she said seriously. "It was that new man down at the store. He was talking to Fire and Water about fire wagons. Jean and I both heard him, and, what's more, that bad old Jacques was bobbing his silly old head up and down, as if to say, 'Yes, that's right.' "

Jacques Leval was a man without a country. He refused his allegiance to England on the grounds that his family had been French. When the war started, every one expected him to go and fight for France, but Jacques found so many excuses and talked so much about the injustice of the cause that the Factor had given him a solemn warning, and when he refused to heed it Sergeant Harding had taken a hand in the affair, with the

result that Jacques, though inwardly sullen and resentful, had openly given no cause for further worry.

"Lassie, you are to keep away from the store. Mind what I say, for I mean it." Mr. Mewhinney's voice was stern, and the customary twinkle had gone from his deep-set eyes.

Nancy understood the look. "Yes, Granddaddy," she said quietly.

Captain Struthers returned and accepted the Factor's invitation to stay with him, for himself and his one lieutenant.

"We'll all have dinner together. You, Miss Phœbe, must take the head of the table; and, Barney, you'll come, of course." Mr. Mewhinney rubbed his big hands in silent anticipation. "We'll have a bit of a talk about things, and you can tell us all the news," he added, smiling.

Barney looked at his superior officer. It was a full minute before the Captain realized that the look meant a question. For answer, he slapped Barney on the back.

"Look at me again like that, Sergeant, and though you're a bigger man than I am I'll punch you," he said.

"Thank you, sir." Barney saluted, as best he could, for Nancy was still on his shoulder, but his laughing blue eyes met the serious brown ones, and the subject of rank was buried between them from that time on.

CHAPTER IV

JEAN'S WARNING

CAPTAIN STRUTHERS turned to the Factor. "Lieutenant Bunce will follow a little later," he explained. "He will have to stay and see that the men understand the orders for the night."

The men down the road were already making preparations for striking camp, and the troopers had led their horses to the lake. It was not the first time that they had ever camped at Billancourt, and they knew their way about.

"Tell some of your men to go up to the Lodge and talk to my boys, will you, Captain Struthers?" Phœbe asked "They are so lonely it will do them a world of good to see some new faces."

"Indeed, I will," the Captain agreed. "But they are a noisy lot; I think I had better send a few at a time."

Phœbe nodded. "Let's wait until they have

had their dinner and we have had ours," she said, smiling, then she laughed. "It is so long since I have sat down at a table with company that I am sure I will not know how to act."

"How long have you been here?" the Captain inquired. "It seems a dreary out-of-the-way place for an English girl to be, but perhaps it is impertinent of me to ask," he finished.

Phœbe turned and looked at him hard for the first time. She saw, to her surprise, that, in spite of the lines around his mouth, he was little more than a boy. Somehow the realization surprised her. She glanced at his sleeve; on one he wore the four service bars: one red to denote the first year of the war, the rest blue. On the other arm he wore a wound stripe. This seemed natural; few men have gone through this whole war without a scratch.

"He must have been in short trousers when he enlisted," she thought to herself. It was not until she saw the rather hurt expression on his face that she realized she had not answered his question.

"I beg your pardon," she said, laughing. "I was wool gathering for the second. I have been here for almost four months. I was in Montreal when Colonel Padgett decided to fit out the Lodge for some of the boys whose lungs had been affected. He said that if any air could help them this could. I was not doing very much at the time, and he asked me to take charge. I was only too glad to get away, so I took our old housekeeper and up we came. Mr. Mewhinney took us in with open arms, and he has been taking care of us ever since. The Indians were not here then. They were hunting in the bush, and you know they take all the family along, though why the tiny babies don't die of cold, I'm sure I don't know."

Captain Struthers looked at her wonderingly.

"Wasn't it a bit lonely sometimes?"

"Yes, it was," Phœbe replied frankly. "Of course the doctor rode in whenever he could, but there was not much he could do, and sometimes Barney came. Barney Harding is a darling," she added feelingly. "No matter how bad the

weather he'd get here, see how we were, cheer us up and then off he'd go. But it's been worth it. My boys are better."

"And you?" Captain Struthers surprised himself for the second time that day. Phœbe shrugged her shoulders and would have answered had not the sight of Jean limping down the road, waving his arms and talking excitedly, made them all stop.

"Now, what's the matter?" The Factor shook his head and smiled dryly. No one that knew Jean ever got excited until they heard his story, for the queer little chap was just as likely to make a terrible fuss over some supposed insult from Alf as he would over the arrival of the Germans.

As always, Jean spoke directly to Nancy.

"Little one, there is trouble!" he announced excitedly. "The Indians are behaving with strangeness. The Madam Wing send me to say that the cook she go, and only now I see your Moonflower talking big with some of the squaws by the front of Old Smoke's hut."

Every face turned to the Factor. He looked thoughtfully down the road; when he spoke, it was to Captain Struthers.

"Man," he said quietly, "I'm verra sorry this has occurred. I will have to leave you for a few minutes, but ma Nancy will take you to the house where I hope you'll make yourself comfortable. Miss Phœbe will entertain you, I'm sure, Barney."

"Sure and I'm with ye, sir!" The Irishman scented trouble, and to judge by the expression of his eyes he enjoyed the prospects.

Captain Struthers bowed. "If I can help you, sir," he began, but the Factor shook his head.

"It's no that bad," he assured him. "Barney and I will see what's wrong, and I make no doubt we'll be back before you miss us." They hurried off down the road, Jean trying his best to keep up with them.

"Captain Struthers," Phœbe began, "I'm afraid I will have to desert you too. If the cook has gone, I will have to help get supper for the men." She hesitated, then added hurriedly, "If you'd care to, I'd like ever so much to have

you come and see the Lodge. The boys would be very flattered too."

The Captain seemed to consider for a minute, then he nodded briskly. "Indeed I'll come," he said. "But first I must go back and give an order or two that I forgot. I'll not be long," he promised as he turned to go. "Will you come with me, Miss Nancy? I might get lost, you know."

Nancy looked up in surprise. "I say!" she exclaimed, "you are nice, and, do you know, I didn't think you were going to be."

Captain Struthers laughed a long, hearty laugh, that rang out and woke the echoes in the silent woods. It was the straight, joyous laugh of an honest boy, and the memory of it stayed with Phœbe as she hurried along the muddy path to the Lodge.

She found Mrs. Wing in the low-rafted kitchen, busily stirring a pot of soup on the stove and complaining bitterly to herself. She took Phœbe's entrance as a matter of course and went on with her grumbling. "Just what comes of engaging

heathens to work for you. I've always been against it and I always will be. Here she stood in Miss Phœbe's own kitchen, sullen as an old bear, and jabbered to me—a respectable woman that's doing my best for our brave boys, though it's little enough I can do to be sure—jabbering about what, I ask you? Fire wagons, the end of the world, and such nonsense! Never heard the beat of it in my life, and I'm sure I never hope to. As I said, I'm only one poor woman that's doing her best and that not much, considering how I'm a victim to rheumatism, but I do my best—"

"Of course you do, you old dear." Phœbe, during the discourse, had taken off her sweater and tam and put on an apron, and joined Mrs. Wing at the stove. "You are a wonder, and I quite agree with you that Indians are not very satisfactory as cooks, but it's the best Billancourt has to offer." She tasted the soup daintily. "Never mind, though; the boys will never know the difference. This soup is delicious. What else had we better give them? Porridge and cream, I think."

Mrs. Wing turned from the pot of soup long enough to remove the lid from a big double boiler. Phœbe looked in it, to see a bubbling, creamy mass of oatmeal. Mrs. Wing put back the cover with a sigh.

"I may not be an Indian and I may not be as spry as I was once," she announced with an injured sniff, "but I can still boil oatmeal when the lives of brave and uncomplaining men depend on it."

Phœbe wanted to laugh, but kindness and loyalty to the dear old lady made her keep her face very grave. Not that she was sorry for Mrs. Wing, for she knew, from long association, that she was never so happy as when she had cause to complain. The rôle of an unappreciated and long-suffering worker had been a favorite of hers as long as Phœbe could remember.

"Now, isn't that splendid!" she exclaimed. "Why, you've left me nothing to do but get the trays ready."

A knock on the outer door drowned Mrs. Wing's sorrowful reply. Phœbe went to answer it. A

smiling and embarrassed soldier stood on the threshold, cap in hand.

"Captain Struthers' compliments, ma'm. Can I be of any help? I'm the company cook, and it's Captain's orders that I stay, please, ma'm."

"Why, that's very nice of Captain Struthers," Phœbe replied graciously, "but I don't think there is anything—"

"Oh, please, ma'm," the soldier, very red in the face by now but very determined, interrupted her; "the Captain was most particular about it, ma'm. He said as how I must stay and find something to do."

Phœbe, nonplussed, turned to Mrs. Wing in time to see her nodding her head and smiling most affably.

"And stay you shall," she replied, beaming, "and most kind and thoughtful it was of the Captain to send you. Won't you be taking off your coat? What part of Canada do you come from, if I may be so bold as to ask?"

The Tommy, quite at his ease by now, hung his coat over the back of a chair and started

rolling up his sleeves as he answered:

"I can't rightly say that I come from any special part, ma'm. I've not been here long; just a couple of months before the war," he shrugged his shoulders. "I thought if I joined up here I'd get to France the sooner, but I guess my luck is bad. Last month I thought I was surely going to sail, and then all of a sudden I was transferred to the tanks. I'm a Yorkshire man," he added, as an afterthought.

Mrs. Wing folded her plump arms. "You don't tell me!" she exclaimed. "Yorkshire, like meself!"

Phœbe smiled and slipped out of the room. She felt quite sure that she would not be missed.

On the veranda she found Captain Struthers in earnest conversation with the men. From what she caught of the conversation, as she stood in the doorway, he was explaining the inside workings of the tanks. The men were listening with the deepest interest. He stopped when he saw her and got up from his place beside Harry.

"I'm afraid I've been boring your patients aw-

fully," he apologized, "but Nancy gave me strict orders not to come to dinner without you."

Phœbe laughed. "Well, I don't seem to be needed here," she said. "The nice boy that you sent to help in the kitchen has conspired with Mrs. Wing to get rid of me, and I know that everything is quite safe in their hands."

"Good! Then find a wrap and come along." The Captain held open the door as he spoke, and Phœbe went inside, to return after a minute or two, muffled in a big fur coat.

CHAPTER V

TOMMY BUNCE

NANCY met them when they were half-way to the Factor's house. She was bubbling over with suppressed excitement.

"Moonflower hasn't come back," she announced, "and neither have Barney nor Granddaddy, and Jean says that queer man that was around the store yesterday has just disappeared, and there isn't any dinner because Moonflower let the stove go out and I just can't make it start again, and neither can Jean because he's so excited he can't do anything, and I'm sure I don't know what we are going to have for supper and won't Granddaddy be funny and cross because he's always hungry when he's been out trouble hunting and—" Lack of breath made it necessary for Nancy to stop and gave her listeners a chance to answer.

"Don't worry about dinner,"—Phœbe laughed

—"because we'll find something for Granddaddy and Barney, even if we have to go back to the Lodge and steal the boys' oatmeal, and as for the fire—" She turned toward the Captain.

"I'll take care of that," he promised. "We'll have a roaring blaze inside of ten seconds, and I'm a wonderful cook."

A long, surprised whistle made them all jump and turn. Lieutenant Bunce had come up behind them unawares. Nancy greeted him like an old friend.

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you!" she said. "But you scared me almost to death!"

"Sorry," Lieutenant Bunce apologized, "but when I heard Lucky say he was a wonderful cook," —he looked accusingly at the Captain—"well, I simply couldn't help whistling."

Lieutenant Bunce was a handsome youngster, still in his teens. He lived to fulfill two aims in life—one, to serve faithfully the British Army, and the other, to become as much like his idol, Captain Struthers, as it was possible.

"That's all right, Bunce. Put on as many airs

as you like, but I am a good cook, and, what's more, I am about to prove it. Come along, Nancy. Lead the way to the kitchen."

They had reached the house by now, and Nancy opened the front door. They found themselves in a long, low-ceilinged room, the floor covered with deer skins. There was very little furniture of any kind—a few solid-looking chairs, a rough table and a lounge covered by several fur pelts. A huge stone fireplace occupied almost the entire end of the room, and on either side of it shelves of books reached almost to the ceiling. In spite of the bareness, however, there was a look of home and comfort about it that appealed strongly to the two men.

"I say," Lieutenant Bunce exclaimed; "this is what I call a real living-room! Just listen to that old fire crackle, will you?"

"I built it," Nancy announced with pardonable pride. "Got the logs and everything."

Captain Struthers was busy examining a rifle that he had found in the corner, but he looked at the fire and patted the top of Nancy's head.

Phœbe stood with her foot on the fender and watched the flames as they curled around the dry logs. She felt restless, shaken out of herself for the first time in months. Something had made the heavy weight in her heart a little lighter. She wanted to laugh—not the quiet laugh that she had taught herself to use when her patients needed cheering, but a real happy, care-free laugh, that would call forth a response from Captain Struthers. A few hours before she had turned white at the sound of his voice. Now she found herself longing to hear it, especially the laughter in it, for it was so like her brothers' that she felt again something of the old joy and fun that had always been hers when Phil was beside her and war was a thing to laugh about.

A silence fell on the room, for Nancy was off to investigate the icebox, and the men were absorbed in their inspection of the Factor's collection of guns.

"Let's have dinner in here and cook it in the fireplace," Phœbe said suddenly. "We always did that on Sunday evening at home."

Captain Struthers put down the gun he was holding and came over to her.

"That's a corking idea!" he agreed eagerly. "There's nothing better on earth than a roasted potato."

"Miss Marshal, that's what I call mean!" Lieutenant Bunce tried to sound reproachful and failed. "I was just going to suggest that very thing. Of course I'm only a rough soldier but I can cook bacon over a fire to the Queen's taste."

"Poor Lieutenant Bunce!" Phœbe laughed. "I'm so sorry I said it first, but, never mind, you shall cook the bacon unless the Captain insists on doing it himself. I always burn it when I try."

"Oh, Lucky won't insist! He's scared to death at the thought. He never cooked anything in his life."

For answer, the Captain looked scornfully at his young friend and marched out of the room, calling to Nancy.

When he was out of hearing, Phœbe asked, "Why do you call him Lucky?"

"Oh, that's a name he got at the very beginning of the war," Lieutenant Bunce was only too eager to explain. "He was always getting into the most awful holes, and everybody would be sure he was done for, and then up he'd come smiling, and when the men would make a fuss over him he'd want to know what the row was all about. Of course I've never been over,"—Bunce blushed at such an acknowledgment of youth—"but some of his friends and mine have told me. Why, you'd hardly believe the crazy things he's done! Crawled out at night under the German fire to bring back men that were injured; went on all kinds of scouting parties. He enlisted as a private, you know, and he wasn't a bit keen on being made an officer. He said one Canadian was as good as another, and he liked being with the boys, and of course he was dead right."

"Then—" Phœbe prompted.

"Oh, the Colonel talked to him and told him if he was so fond of the men he ought to be willing to lead them, and of course old Lucky just grinned, because he knew he was doing that anyway, and

then came the attack—" Lieutenant Bunce paused and looked thoughtfully at the fire; his big eyes were wide with the wonder of his thoughts.

"I say," he said eagerly, "some day when we're alone together I'd like to tell you about that fight."

Phœbe's eyes sparkled, and her breath came quickly. "Oh, I wish you would," she answered. "I'd love to hear it."

"We, might take a walk or something," Bunce suggested.

Phœbe thought of the old road that beckoned so mysteriously to the coast.

"To-morrow afternoon," she said eagerly. "I know a splendid walk, and we won't be interrupted, I'm sure of that."

"Good, then that's a date!" Bunce was delighted. He held out his hand, and was shaking Phœbe's vigorously when Nancy and Lucky Struthers came into the room.

The time they had spent in the kitchen had not been wasted. Besides finding food enough for a royal spread, the Captain had learned from the

willing Nancy all about Phœbe and her two brothers.

"Granddaddy says that what she wants is a bit of cheering," Nancy had finished, and down in his heart Lucky Struthers had determined that if he could help he would.

CHAPTER VI

A SUPPER PARTY

"LUCKY'S going to make corn bread," Nancy announced, as she danced into the room. "And we've found potatoes and apples and bacon and coffee and—"

"And in case our chef"—Lucky turned to Tommy Bunce and grinned boyishly—"burns up everything, we have a whole boiled ham and some bread and butter." He rolled up his sleeve as he spoke and made a great show of preparing to mix the batter for corn bread.

Phœbe and Tommy Bunce fixed the coffee, and Nancy set the table by the simple method of pulling off the cover and piling plates, knives, forks and spoons in the center of it. For a few minutes they worked in silence, each very intent on his own task. After much kneading and mixing, Lucky Struthers looked up from the big pan before him

and cast an appealing glance toward Phœbe, who pretended not to see it. It was all she could do to keep from laughing, for the corn bread batter was a thick, hard and certainly an unappetizing sight.

Lucky added a few more ingredients, then he passed his hand over his forehead, leaving a streak of white flour.

"I seem to have sort of lost the knack," he admitted in a small voice. "This doesn't look just right somehow. Miss Marshal, would you give me some advice? What's it need now, eh?"

Phœbe cast a critical eye at the mixture, but Tommy answered for her.

"That's not fair, Lucky," he protested. "Miss Marshal doesn't like to come right out and say. Better ask me."

"What do you know about it?" Lucky demanded. "I can really make the stuff once I get the hang of it, but—well, since you're so smart, suppose you tell me what it does need."

Tommy looked at him pityingly. "It needs a

grave, old man,'' he replied sadly. ''A nice little hole in the ground where it can forget it's stiff and lumpy self.''

''Lumpy—why, that's it!''—the Captain smiled cheerfully. ''That's all that's wrong with it,'' and with a confident nod he went back to kneading the thick dough, whistling gayly.

Phœbe and Tommy looked at each other, and Tommy grinned.

''If he does that much longer it will make a first-class rock. It's shoe leather now,'' he complained in a whisper, and added sadly, ''I was just dying for some real corn bread too.''

''Don't be discouraged. Perhaps when the Captain finishes—'' She did not say more, but Tommy nodded hopefully.

For the past few minutes Nancy had been staring critically, first at Lucky and then at the batter. Now she nudged Lucky's arm and pointed to it. In pantomime she explained, with a sympathetic shake of her head, that it was hopeless, and with a finger on her lips for silence she motioned him to suspend operations until her return. In

amused obedience Lucky left the table and joined Phœbe and Tommy by the fire.

"Anything I can do to help?" he inquired airily. "My er—er—dough has to—er—settle a bit," he added. Tommy and Phœbe exchanged glances, but they were both too busy, or pretended to be, finding a safe place to rest the coffee pot, to answer.

But Lucky was in no way disturbed by their want of sympathy. He took a few turns around the room, his flour-covered hands in his pockets, and he whistled a cheerful march. A scuffle behind the door made him peek into the hall. Nancy was there, and she was dragging a forlorn and terrified Indian dog toward the room. Lucky waited in the corner behind the fireplace and watched for developments. The dog was too frightened to make a sound, and Nancy's small strong arms had little trouble in dragging him into the room and over to the table. Lucky held his breath. It was difficult to know just what would happen next. Needless to say, he was not at all prepared for what did. With an effort,

Nancy hoisted the now rigid animal on to the table, and with a deliberation that left no chance to doubt that the plan had been well worked out in her small head she pushed his black little nose right into the center of the corn bread and held it there. Then she gave a very exaggerated but very startling exclamation.

"Oh, mercy me! You bad, bad dog!" she cried. "Just see what you've done!"

Phœbe and Tommy ran to the table—it was well in shadow beyond the glow of the fire—to find out the trouble. Nancy pointed an accusing finger at the poor puppy.

"Did you see him come in?" she demanded. "Isn't it just too dreadful! All that batter wasted!"

"Where is Captain Struthers?" Phœbe asked, trying hard not to laugh. But on looking about the room, Lucky was nowhere to be seen.

"I'll find him and tell him," Nancy said eagerly. She loosened her grip on the dog's neck, and with a yelp of thankfulness he ran from the room, with Nancy after him. She found Lucky in the kitchen.

He was leaning against the corner cupboard for support, and he was laughing so hard that his big shoulders shook.

She perched herself on the edge of the table, cupped her chin in her hand, and regarded him thoughtfully.

"You know, Granddaddy would say that that was not very square," she confessed. "But what could I do? I had to save you somehow, for of course that stuff was just too awful for words."

"Nancy, Nancy,"—Lucky picked her up and held her high above his head—"that was a master stroke of cleverness; if we had you in the tanks we could outwit the Huns and win the war the day after we landed in France."

"Well, but, Lucky, I'd just love to go with you and help," Nancy replied very seriously—so seriously in fact that Lucky's hearty shout of laughter hurt her feelings.

They stayed out in the kitchen, feeding the dog scraps of meat to make up for the indignities he had had to suffer, until they heard the Factor and Barney open the front door. When they returned

to the living-room, supper was ready, and there was corn bread. Phœbe had mixed it after Mrs. Wing's recipe, and the result had been all that could be asked of corn bread.

"Faith, me dear, 'tis the grandest tasting bread that I iver let melt in me mouth," Barney assured her, as he helped himself to an extra large piece. He and the Factor had looked worried and tired when they came in, but Barney never showed worry for long, and he had hardly been seated at the table before he was quite himself again. Rab Mewhinney, on the other hand, was quiet all evening. Phœbe, watching him as the rest teased Lucky about his corn bread, knew that something was wrong, but she did not ask questions. Just as she was going, she whispered to him, "if anything should happen, bring Nancy to the Lodge, won't you?"—and his nod was a promise.

The three men walked with her to the path that led to the Lodge, but it was Barney who claimed the right to see her to the door.

"Don't forget our date!" Tommy called back, after they had parted.

"Indeed, I won't," Phœbe answered, then she turned seriously to Barney.

"What's wrong?" she demanded, but if she expected to hear she reckoned without knowledge of her companion's fixed rule—never tell bad news to a woman if you can help it.

"Wrong?" he scoffed at the idea. "Not a thing in this grand old world, me dear. A bit of a shindy with Fire and Water and nobody the worse for it. Come, now, don't be bothering your little head about it. He's a fine chap, that youngster Bunce—full of the stuff that makes fighting men; and the Captain, there's a man for you, a real man." Barney held out his big hand as they reached the door. Phœbe put hers into it. "And here's another," she said seriously.

Barney looked at her and grinned. "Sure now, Miss Phœbe, 'tis not Barney P. Harding that you'll iver make believe that there's not a bit of the Irish in you," he chuckled.

"Well, there's not," Phœbe laughed. "Maybe now you'll believe that Canadian girls can say the right thing once in awhile."

Barney chuckled to himself as he strode back over the path to camp.

"There's one who can, and that's sure," he said aloud to the trees.

CHAPTER VII

A VOICE IN THE DARK

PHŒBE went up softly to her room and opened the big window wide. Outside, the moon was shining and the stars' brilliance lent a velvet sheen to the dark sky. She took a deep breath—the air was cool and crisp, but the biting chill of winter was gone. With a start Phœbe realized that the bleak months were over and that spring was not just a dream but a reality—a very muddy reality to judge by her boots—but the promise of warmth in the air that she breathed was there, and she put the dreary thoughts of winter behind her and let her mind dwell on the future.

For the past year the terrible uncertainty of her younger brother's death had haunted her. No matter what her task or the smile with which she did it, back in her brain, like the persistent roar of the ocean, the thought of him was there,

making her brain ache, and dulling her senses. She pictured him wounded, uncared for, or worse —brutalized over in some merciless German prison camp, helpless and unable to defend himself. Proof of his death would have been a welcomed relief, but as the days dragged by and the weeks lengthened into months, no news came, and Phœbe drilled her brain to work along dull lines that had to do with her work and partially succeeded in conquering the terrors that had beset her.

To-night, however, she made no effort to control her thoughts, and to her surprise they were happy memories that claimed them.

Instead of going to bed, she pulled a chair over to the window, laid her face on her arm and looked out into the night. She was too excited to sleep. Her room was directly over the down-stairs veranda, and it was not long before her thoughts were interrupted by a rasping cough. She sat up and listened. It was Harry, she knew. As the coughing continued, she got up and hurried down-stairs, selecting a medicine bottle from the sideboard, on her way through the living-room.

She stole softly to the boy's side and lifted him gently. "Here, dear, take this; perhaps it will help a bit." She administered the dose, and Harry, after a sleepy thanks, dozed off.

As she went back into the house she paused. "I don't know what's the matter with me to-night"—she spoke sharply to herself. "I'll be awfully tired by to-morrow if I don't have some rest, but I feel so funny and restless." Her eyes fell on the blanket that had covered her in the hammock that morning. It was lying on a chair and the moonbeams fell on it, bringing out the queer design. Phœbe looked at it for some time, then she picked it up, put on her fur coat and pulled a warm red tam well down over her ears. She listened a moment and then crept softly out of the door. The hammock seemed much farther from the Lodge in the moonlight than it had in the sun, but the novel idea of lying out under the stars over-ruled Phœbe's fears. She reached it at last, rolled herself up snugly in her blanket and looked up contentedly at the tall pine trees towering above her.

The breezes rocked her gently, and in spite of her apparent sleeplessness she dozed.

Her dreams at first were happy. Memories of the amusing supper, and through them like a glint of yellow sunshine ran the echo of Lucky Struthers' laughter. But just before the dawn, as the cold breeze stiffened her muscles and she tossed uneasily, she reached the half-wakeful, half-drowsy state that comes between consciousness and oblivion. An eerie, inexplicable sense of another presence stole over her: first a succession of the soft pad-pad of Indian moccasins, an interchange of guttural sounds; then a phrase, whispered but clear and distinct, that left a vivid but sinister impression on Phœbe's mind as she struggled to get possession of her senses. She sat up, rubbed her eyes, and looked about her. A pale sun struggled through cold gray clouds, the trees took on grotesque shapes in the uncertain light, nothing seemed familiar.

With a shudder, half fright, half cold, Phœbe snuggled down again and sought the comfort of the warm blanket.

"I must have been dreaming," she said aloud. Her eyelids drooped and she fell asleep again.

"That's never you," a startled exclamation broke from Sergeant Harding. He stood over the hammock, bewilderment in every line of his face.

Phœbe woke up with a start to find a clear blue sky in place of the gray clouds, and a sun, gold and warm. She looked up at Barney and laughed.

"Yes, it is, and I'm not a ghost," she assured him. "Don't look so horrified."

"And will you be pleased to tell me how you got here and for why?" Barney demanded, none too clearly. "I don't understand it, I don't; not at all."

"Well, to tell you the truth, Barney, I'm not perfectly sure," Phœbe admitted. "I was restless and couldn't sleep, I think; so I came out here."

"And why should you leave a good comfortable bed to do that?" Barney demanded. "Beyond me, it is entirely. Is it sick, you are?" he asked, the idea entering his mind for the first time.

"Sick? I should say not," Phœbe denied. "I slept like a log, and I feel fit as a daisy. What time is it?"

"Seven o'clock, it is," Barney replied, after consulting his watch; "and time for you to be going in the house. It's your death you'll be catching! Glory be, 'tis most extraordinary!" he exclaimed incredulously, shaking his head.

Phœbe jumped up. "Why, that's late! If Mrs. Wing catches me—" She finished the sentence with an expressive shrug. "Good-by, Barney, and don't tell on me, will you?"

Barney watched her until she entered the house, then he turned on his heel, whistled softly and hurried off to keep his appointment with Rab Mewhinney. He found the Factor and Nancy at breakfast, and it was not long before Lucky Struthers and Lieutenant Bunce joined them. Barney did exactly what Phœbe had told him not to; he recounted his experience of finding her in the hammock. "And Mr. Mewhinney, man, you must talk to her severely," he finished. "She only laughs at me."

The Factor smiled ruefully. "I make no doubt she'll do the same to me," he replied; "but, as you say, Barney, I must speak to her, for such a thing is not safe just now."

"I say, was she really in any danger?" Tommy Bunce demanded. "If I'd known, I'd 'a' posted a guard near her."

Lucky Struthers frowned. "Girls always need so much taking care of," he complained. "I'll be glad to get back to France," he added feelingly. "Can't see, for the life of me, why they keep us marking time over here."

The talk drifted to other matters, and for the moment Phœbe was forgotten. By all, that is, except Nancy. As soon as she had finished her breakfast she hurried to the Lodge. On the way she met Jean, but for once her boon companion had no time to stop and talk.

"Bad, everything bad," he explained hurriedly, "Fire and Water gone. Something is much the matter. I, Jean, feel what I don't know." He hurried off, limping painfully and muttering to himself.

Nancy watched him out of sight, and then, dismissing the subject with a shrug, she ran on to the Lodge. She found Phœbe on the veranda, making the men comfortable for the day. Her arrival was hailed with glee.

"Well, now," Old Bill greeted her. "Here she comes to cheer us up."

"No," Nancy denied, "not just this minute. I've got to talk to Phœbe first—privately," she added mysteriously.

Phœbe put her arm around her and drew her into the house.

"Well, what's the secret?" she asked, smiling.

Nancy shook a small brown finger accusingly. "You're going to catch it," she announced warningly, "from Granddaddy and most likely from Captain Struthers too, and Tommy Bunce is going to post a guard, and I think Barney is quite the crossest of them all, except perhaps Lucky, because he said that girls always did need no end of looking after, and anyway you mustn't ever do it again for all sorts of dreadful things might hap-

pen, though I'm sure I don't know what they are, and you won't, will you?''

Phœbe, accustomed from months of companionship, managed to understand something of what Nancy meant.

''So Barney told on me, did he? All right for him!'' She stopped and thought for a minute. ''Of course Captain Struthers doesn't need to worry about me, and I'm sure I don't know why he thinks he does.'' Her voice sounded her displeasure and she tossed her small head in defiance.

''Phew! I never saw you mad before,'' Nancy remarked wonderingly.

''Nonsense!'' Phœbe replied sharply. ''I'm not mad, as you express it, now, but I do think they are all making an unnecessary fuss over nothing.'' And without another word she walked into the kitchen and surprised Mrs. Wing by insisting on helping her with the dishes.

Nancy returned to the veranda and settled herself comfortably on the foot of Harry's bed. The

twenty representatives of the Canadian Army sighed in anticipation, and the fun began.

Meanwhile Phœbe washed and swept and dusted to the steady accompaniment of Mrs. Wing's murmured disapproval. In a very short time everything was shining and in perfect order. Phœbe stopped long enough to wonder what to do next, but before she came to any decision a cheery "Hello, there" made her turn to the open door, to find Tommy Bunce, his handsome face wreathed in smiles and his hand held out in greeting.

"I say, you do look busy," he complained. "I'll wager you've forgotten all about our walk."

Phœbe, her good humor restored, shook her head in emphatic denial.

"Indeed, I have not,"—she laughed, "but I thought you would not be free until noon. I'm all ready to go any minute."

"Then come along. I've a whole day with nothing to do. Lucky is on the war-path, and he told me in none too pretty language that I talked too much, and that as a soldier he had no doubt I would make an excellent farmer, and he finally

ended by telling me to go out for a walk and explore the countryside, which simply means that he's in no end of a rotten humor, and that's the time I always make myself as scarce as possible."

"I'm sorry Captain Struthers is upset," Phœbe replied politely, but with a touch of resentment in her voice, "but his loss is our gain. It's a gorgeous day, and we might go for a really long walk and take our lunch along."

"Ripping," Tommy declared excitedly. "We'll have a regular old tramp. How far did you say it was to the shore?"

"Ten Indian miles according to Nancy," Phœbe replied "That's just a nice walk. Now, you go out and amuse the boys while I fix up a little luncheon."

Tommy nodded and left her, and Phœbe went about her task.

"Bless the lamb," Mrs. Wing stood in the doorway and beamed a few minutes later. Phœbe was still busy, and she was singing as her old housekeeper had not heard her in many a long month.

CHAPTER VIII

BROTHER BALLOU

"OH, Phœbe, something awful has happened!" Nancy's white little face interrupted the last preparations. Phœbe was just packing the last piece of cake in the luncheon basket as she came in.

"Why, what is it, dear?" she asked, stopping.

"Brother Ballou has escaped"—tragedy was written large on Nancy's face, for the little cinnamon bear was one of her most adored possessions —"and Jean can't find him anywhere, and Granddaddy says I can't go and look for him, and if he's really lost he'll die because he's not used to taking care of himself, and Jean doesn't seem to care, and why can't I go into the woods to find him?" This last appeal was muffled in sobs, as Nancy threw herself into Phœbe's open arms and burst into tears.

"There, there, dearest," Phœbe comforted. "He'll come back, don't you worry, and if he doesn't, perhaps Lieutenant Bunce and I will find him. We are going for a walk, and I promise that I'll watch for him every minute, so stop crying."

Nancy dried her eyes but refused to be altogether comforted.

"I don't believe he'd come if he heard you call," she said dubiously. "You see, he doesn't really know you."

"Oh, but I'm sure he would," Phœbe assured her, smiling. "If he's lost and hungry, he'll be glad enough to come to any one."

Nancy nodded, and the hamper being packed Phœbe called Lieutenant Bunce, and they started off, Nancy's last instructions as to the best method of capturing Brother Ballou following them along the old road.

"Poor baby!" Phœbe smiled, as a bend hid Nancy from view. "I thought that all kinds of things had happened when she burst into the kitchen just now. We really must keep a sharp watch for the little bear."

"Rather," Tommy agreed. "It's the toughest thing I know to lose a pet."

"A bear's a strange sort of pet, isn't it?" Phœbe asked. "When I first came up here I was terrified at it, but Nancy assured me that Ballou was as gentle as a lamb, and I had to take her word for it. Now of course I am really very fond of the little fellow."

"Lucky adores animals." Tommy had not forgotten that his captain was to be the subject of their conversation.

"Really." Phœbe broke off a branch that hung in her way. "Do you know," she added wonderingly, "I can't understand why Mr. Mewhinney would not let Nancy come out to look for Ballou herself. The child's so used to the woods. She and Jean wander through them all the time."

"I expect he was afraid of her straying too far." Tommy dismissed the subject and returned to his chosen one.

"As I was saying, Lucky is no end wild about animals, especially dogs. One of the bravest things he ever did was to go out in broad daylight

under heavy fire and pick up the pieces of one of the Red Cross dogs. Said the beggar had saved his life and he wasn't going to watch him suffer. That was before he was an officer, and he got a proper dressing down, I can tell you, for taking such chances."

"I can't see why any one should object to his doing a splendid thing like that," Phœbe was prompt in his defense. "He was only risking his own life and I'm sure he had a right to do that."

"Oh, but he hadn't," Tommy objected. "When you join the army your life belongs to your country, and Lucky's life was much too important to throw away on a dog. You see, he was the best all-round soldier in his regiment. He could do almost anything in those days. This was the beginning, you know. A man like that counted, I can tell you, and of course there never was any one like Lucky for putting the punch into the men. He could cheer them up when they had forgotten that they ever had been cheerful, and how they worshiped him! That's why they followed him in that last attack."

The crisp wind had blown a bright color into Phœbe's cheeks, and her eyes sparkled. "Tell me about it," she demanded eagerly.

Tommy, only too eager to begin, fell into step beside her, and together they walked through the brown leaves, while Tommy, fired by ardent enthusiasm, painted a picture of charred battle-fields and told the story of a brave man's daring.

"—And then they got him!" He paused several minutes later and took time to look at his companion. Phœbe was looking straight ahead of her, her eyes misty with unshed tears.

"Is that all?" she asked softly.

Tommy shook his head. "No, not by a long shot! When he fell, the boys all saw him—couldn't help it, you know—he was pretty much in evidence up there in front, and the line wavered. They thought he was gone, you see, and it sort of took their nerve. The fellow who told me about it said he felt, 'Well, Lucky's gone, so nothing else matters.' But Old Lucky wasn't as far gone as they thought. They'd got him in the hip, and he couldn't walk—couldn't even get to his knees—but

he crawled along, still ahead of his men, waving his empty revolver and yelling like mad. They say he sang some foolish old ballad with silly, love-sick words, but what did it matter? He got to the Boche trench, rolled over the top and fainted. His men put him in a nice comfy dugout that some Fritzie had had to vacate in rather a hurry, and then they cleaned up that line and before night they were two miles beyond that and still going. I've heard the Colonel say that the hardest job he ever had was stopping that wave of madmen."

Phœbe walked for a long time in silence. Then she said gravely:

"He ought to be very, very proud, but somehow he doesn't seem to be. I wonder what he really thinks about it all?"

"Well, the only remark he has ever been known to make on the subject was when some one of the men told him what the Colonel had said. Old Lucky frowned a minute and then he said, 'Two miles, hum. Pity I wasn't dead; they might have made four."

Phœbe laughed in spite of herself. "That's just

the sort of thing I can imagine his saying,''—she nodded. ''It's a wonderful story, and I'm awfully glad you told me. I wish there was something I could say to Captain Struthers that would make him understand just how splendid I think he is.''

''Don't try,'' Tommy exclaimed. ''Lucky'd hate it and he'd know I told you and then I'd—Hello! What's this?''

They stopped suddenly and looked down at the ground. Brother Ballou, a limp little ball of brown, was lying at their feet. Phœbe dropped to her knees beside him and lifted him on to her lap. He was quite lifeless and cold, and a big gash on his head gave proof that a blow had been the cause.

''Dead! Poor little Nancy! It will break her heart!'' Tommy said feelingly.

''Tommy,'' Phœbe said suddenly, ''who could have done it? That gash looks as if some one had struck him.''

''It does,'' Tommy agreed. ''He's been clubbed to death, poor little chap! How limp he looks!''

But Phœbe was not paying any attention to him. Her mind was busy with a new idea.

"I don't understand," she said at last. "There's not a man, woman or child for miles that doesn't know that this is Nancy's bear. Here's his collar with her name on it still on him. There's something very queer about it all." She puckered her forehead in perplexity and, without understanding why, the memory of the bad dream she had had the night before came into her head.

"Perhaps one of the Indians did it to get even with Mr. Mewhinney. He was dressing them down pretty thoroughly in front of the store this morning," Tommy suggested, but Phœbe refused to accept it as the solution of the question in her mind.

"No," she said, shaking her head. "The Indians are lots more afraid of Nancy than they are of anything else around here and they love her too, most of them. They might try to do something to Mr. Mewhinney, but I don't think they would do it through her. No, it's a stranger, I think."

"The mysterious man at the store," Tommy

suggested, laughing. "The one Jean was talking about." Then as he saw that Phœbe was still worrying he added briskly, "Come along! Don't let's let it spoil our picnic. We can't do anything about it, and poor Brother Ballou is past help. We might give him a proper burial, if you think Nancy would be consoled by it."

Phœbe looked up and smiled. "Tommy, you're a dear!" she said. "We will bury him and mark the place for Nancy, and I'll take the collar back to her."

"Righto!" Tommy agreed and set to work. He found a stick, and it was not long before the soft mud gave way and he was able to dig a hole large enough for the little bear. They laid him in it very gently and covered him with a bow of evergreen. Tommy marked the place with a stone.

"There," he said with a sigh of relief as he wiped his muddy hands on his clean handkerchief, "that's finished, and I don't mind telling you that I'm hungry."

"So am I," Phœbe admitted, "but let's go on a way before we have luncheon."

Tommy understood, and they walked for a few minutes until the grave was well out of sight.

They selected the only dry spot they could find for a dining table, and Phœbe soon had the contents of the basket set out between them on a white napkin.

Tommy did the meal full justice. He amused Phœbe with stories about his men and some of his own hardships at the training camp that he had just left. She laughed and listened, but ate very little herself. After the last crumb had disappeared, Tommy, in spite of her protests, settled himself against the damp trunk of a tree, pulled out his pipe, and smoked in perfect contentment. Phœbe watched him for a little while and then, because she was restless and still worried and uneasy over Brother Ballou's strange end, she got up and went off for a walk. She wanted to think things out and she could do it better away from Tommy, whose very presence seemed to say, "Oh, don't worry!"

The warmth of the noonday sun had tempted a bird to sing. Phœbe listened to his cheery little

chirp and in spite of her worries she laughed softly.

"Tommy, I hear a robin!" she called back over her shoulder. "Come and help me find him."

But Tommy was dozing comfortably and did not hear her, so she went off in search alone. The bird hopped from tree to tree, always inviting her to follow his song. How far she wandered through the woods Phœbe never knew, for at a certain turning of the path a low moan mingled with the bird's chirp, and she found herself looking down into a face distorted with pain.

CHAPTER IX

AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY

"JEAN!" Phœbe was so shocked that she could barely say the name. Jean looked at her and a flash of recognition came into his eyes.

"Go back!" he said; then his head fell over on his chest and he moaned.

Phœbe saw for the first time that he was lashed to the tree with heavy ropes, his clothes were torn and a jagged scar marked his forehead. His pleading, soft-brown eyes were pathetically like those of the little bear. In her dazed state of mind Phœbe could think of nothing else. For a full minute she stood perfectly still, saying, "First Brother Ballou and now Jean," over and over to herself.

"Go back." Jean managed to whisper the words again, though it was with a visible effort.

The sound of his voice aroused Phœbe, and without stopping to untie him she ran back along the path toward Tommy. She found him still dozing under the tree.

"Tommy, come with me quickly! Something terrible has happened! Jean is dying! I found him out there bound to a tree."

Tommy was on his feet and alert in an instant. His composure steadied Phœbe, and she led him back through the woods to Jean.

Together they untied him, and with the water that was left in the thermos bottle Tommy bathed the ugly wound in his head. But nothing they could do would rouse him, and the question of what was going on in the depth of those woods was unsolved. That it was of utmost importance, there was little room for doubt.

"What can we do, Tommy?" Phœbe asked. She was sitting on the ground, Jean's head pillowed on her lap.

"Well, first of all we must get the poor chap back to camp. He's pretty far gone but with luck he may have a chance. Wish I knew what it was

"Jean!" Phœbe was so shocked that she could barely say the name.

all about! This is a queer sort of a spot to imagine anything very important occurring, but blest if I can figure it out! Did any one have a grudge against Jean?"

"Of course not," Phœbe replied almost impatiently. "It's much worse than that! Oh, Tommy, I'm frightened."

"Steady there!" Tommy put his hand on her shoulder. "We've got to keep our heads clear if we are going to be of any use, and we've got to get Jean back where he can be attended to. If he regains consciousness he'll be able to tell us what we want to know. I wish Lucky were here," he added, more to himself than to Phœbe.

She nodded, however, in understanding. "So do I, but he's not, and we'll have to manage ourselves. Are you up to carrying him?"

For answer, Tommy lifted the slender body of the little Jean in his arms very gently. "Better go ahead," he said to Phœbe. She nodded and started ahead, clearing the way of low, hanging branches and making the path as easy for Tommy and his burden as it was possible.

But a road that has not been used for many years, whose very outline loses itself in a tangle of undergrowth every mile or two, is not an easy place along which to carry a dying man, and Tommy and Phœbe found progress slow. They had wasted a good deal of time over their luncheon, and it was well into the middle of the afternoon before they started for home. Tommy tried to hurry, but Jean could give him no help. He lay inert as a dead man across Tommy's shoulders, and every step seemed to add to his weight.

"We must make it before the sun sets," Phœbe said nervously as they paused once to rest. "It's hard enough finding the way now, but it would be impossible without the light."

Tommy looked at the sun and frowned. "Night comes so suddenly up here too," he said. "How far do you think we are from home?"

"I don't know, Tommy," Phœbe confessed. "I've never been in this direction before. I don't even know how far we walked this morning or how near the coast we were. All we can do is to keep on going."

Tommy picked up Jean again, and they started off, walking in silence for the most part, both with their eyes on the sun that was slowly traveling down the western sky. It seemed as though their very life depended on it, and when at last it sank below the level of the bare trees Tommy put down his burden with a sigh of discouragement.

"It seems as if we must have walked fifty miles at least," Phœbe said, trying to force a smile. "Are you awfully tired, Tommy?"

"No, but I am a bit worried," Tommy admitted. "Of course we may be very near home and not know it. Tell you what I'll do. I'll fire my gun and see what happens. They're sure to be a bit worried back there that we don't come back, and I wouldn't be surprised if they were out looking for us."

He suited the action to the word and was just taking his revolver from its case when Phœbe's hand on his wrist made him stop.

"Listen!" she whispered excitedly, her finger on her lips to caution silence.

Tommy peered into the fast-gathering dusk,

trying to pierce the gloom or to detect a sound different from the rustling of the trees.

A soft pad-pad, such as Phœbe had heard the night before, came to them, followed a minute later by a heavier tread. Tommy was about to shout, but something in Phœbe's expression made him pause and wait for her to take the lead. The footsteps stopped. They waited endless minutes; then a voice, thick and German, spoke. It was so near them that they started involuntarily. Phœbe held Tommy's wrist in a tight grasp; his fingers still played with the handle of his gun.

"We are out of sight, you are sure, and nobodies can hear us?" the voice questioned.

A low grunt gave the required assurance, and the voice continued:

"At seven o'clock, then, you start your work. There is no need to worry, except that you do not do it to please me. If in the fight a man or so is killed, who knows who did it? Your peoples are much afraid of the devil wagons. They will surely bring many troubles to you unless you make them go away at once, so with yelling and dancing

and, if need be, burning, you must drive them out." The voice paused and then added impressively, "Remember, no man is to put foot on this road tonight."

"The fire water?" Phœbe and Tommy knew it was an Indian who spoke.

"Behind the store, at the bottom of the old well," came the answer. "Now go. You are sure the barrels are at the place?"

Another grunt, then more footsteps, all apparently taking different directions.

Phœbe and Tommy looked at each other. It was a full minute before either of them spoke.

"We've got to make it now and in short order," Tommy said at last. He got up cautiously and lifted Jean once more to his back. It needed no small effort to do it, and Phœbe noticed it.

"Tommy," she said quietly, "you're tired. Come along as fast as you can. I'm off to find Mr. Mewhinney," and she ran ahead without giving Tommy time to protest. He couldn't call out to her for fear of being heard and he was forced to let her go and struggle along with Jean as best

he could. She was soon out of earshot. Tommy breathed a prayer that she would not meet any of the Indians, and did his best to hurry.

When Phœbe left the Lodge that morning Nancy was the only one who saw her go, and in her grief over Brother Ballou's loss she had not told any one about it. Mrs. Wing knew that Phœbe had gone off with Lieutenant Bunce for a picnic, but where or for how long she had no idea. When four o'clock came and she did not return, the old housekeeper was mildly worried; by five she was in a state of terror; and by six, when only the faint afterglow of the sunset was mirrored in the lake, she was so upset that she could only cover her head in her apron and sob.

It was in this state that Barney found her.

"Mercy on us, woman, what's the matter with you? Sure, it's a terrible thing to be crying like that, it is, and no mistake." All Barney's big heart went out to her and he tried in his clumsy way to console her. But Mrs. Wing refused consolation. She sobbed on unrestrainedly.

"Is it bad news you've had?" Barney asked, puzzled.

"Oh, the lamb! She's dead, I know she is!" Mrs. Wing between sobs explained her fears.

Barney listened as patiently as he possibly could until the full meaning of her words took shape in his brain. Then he stood up very straight and pulled on his gauntlets.

"Woman dear," he said very gently, "it's a terrible thing you've just told me, though not as bad as you'd have it, I hope. We must do something about it at once. Come now and tell Barney all you know." He spoke as he would have to a little child, and under his soothing tone Mrs. Wing dried her eyes and explained that Phœbe had left with Lieutenant Bunce at about ten o'clock with a picnic basket.

"And where did they go? In what direction?" Barney asked eagerly.

Mrs. Wing could not tell him that.

"Well, we'll find them. Sure it's only lost they are," he assured her briskly, and hurried away to find Captain Struthers.

He found him inspecting one of the tanks.

Without the formality of a salute Barney inquired, "Is Lieutenant Bunce about, sir?"

The captain looked up. "No, Sergeant, he's not, but he ought to be," he replied. "I told him to get out of my sight this morning but I didn't mean that I wanted him to go away for a week-end jaunt."

"Then it's lost they are," Barney announced, and the captain wheeled to look at him.

"Lost? Who?" he demanded.

"The two of them; Lieutenant Bunce and Miss Marshal. It's gone they've been the whole day, and no one knows where." Barney's serious expression made the captain catch his breath but he did not interrupt.

"Any other time it would have been no matter, but with the Indians in the state they're in—" A snap of his firm jaw finished the sentence.

"I'll organize a searching party," Struthers suggested. "You'd better do the same. Your men know more about the country than mine do."

"We'll tell Mewhinney first," Barney replied,

and started down the road, taking such big steps that Captain Struthers had a hard time keeping up with him.

When they met the Factor further down the road, another surprise greeted them.

"Have you seen ma Nancy?" was the first question the old man asked. "She's not at the Lodge, and none of the boys know aught of her."

"She's with Miss Marshal and Tommy Bunce," Struthers suggested. "It's for news of them that we came."

Barney continued the explanation, but when he finished the Factor shook his head gravely. "Nancy's no with them, for she was with me for lunch. The puir lass could eat nothing for she was greetin' for her bear. I told her she must not go into the woods to look for him and I canna make myself believe she disobeyed."

"I'm sure she didn't, sir— By Jove!" the Captain interrupted himself, and snapped his fingers.

"Man, what is it?" Barney demanded.

"Nothing much," Struthers confessed, "but last night as we left you and Miss Marshal, Tommy

said something about exploring an old road that led to the shore. I didn't think anything of it at the time but that may be where they went."

"It's more than likely," Barney agreed. "We must lose no time going after them, for it's lost they are sure." He turned to the Factor. "As for Nancy, sir," he said, "if you told her not to go to the woods I'd stake my life on it that she didn't go. It's up at the house she is now, more than likely, waiting for you. Go back and see anyhow, and the Captain and I will send out our men to scour the woods, and, who knows, in the search they may find more than all the three of them!" he added significantly.

The Factor nodded and went off toward the settlement. Barney turned to the right and struck out across fields in the direction of the old barn where his men were quartered. Captain Struthers kept to the road.

As he hurried along, a fear that he would not name took possession of him and he turned cold.

"It's nonsense, my worrying over it. They're just lost, that's all," he tried to reason with him-

self. "Tommy, even if he is an infant about some things, is perfectly able to take care of a girl. Perhaps she's twisted her ankle or hurt herself, and he's lugging her in. Fact is, there are a thousand things that may have happened and none of them are really worth worrying about." Fine and sensible arguments all, but they did not help reassure him. Memories of the little incidents that had occurred throughout the past two days returned to his mind in sinister shapes, and in spite of his reasoning he was still afraid.

He quickened his step and tried to form a plan in his mind for the coming search. His eyes were on the tiny light ahead, so that he did not see a ghost-like figure slip out of the woods. His surprise was complete when, less than a minute later, he was holding Phœbe in his arms, while she struggled desperately to catch her breath.

CHAPTER X

PHŒBE REMEMBERS

"OH, Captain Struthers! I'm so glad it's you!" Phœbe steadied herself on his arm for a minute longer before she explained.

"There's so much to tell that I don't know where to begin," she said at last. "But before I say another word send some one to help Tommy. He's carrying poor Jean. We found him badly hurt early this afternoon. Some one had left him tied to a tree, for dead, I think."

"I'll go myself," Captain Struthers replied quickly. "But let me get you to the Lodge first."

"No, please! I'm quite all right," Phœbe protested. "I'm just out of breath, that's all, and I don't think you'd better go for Tommy. There is so much more to be done— Oh, there's Barney!" she exclaimed gratefully, as the big Irish-

man hurried to them, followed by some of his men. Phœbe explained about Tommy, and one of them went off in search of him.

"Now send some one to the store, Barney, as fast as you can and tell them to watch the old well. There's a lot of whisky hidden in the bottom of it." Two of the troopers went off without waiting for more than a look from Barney, and Phœbe continued: "The Indians are going to create a lot of excitement around here to-night. They have orders to fight, burn or kill—anything so long as they keep you all centered here. There's something terrible going to happen in the woods, but I don't know just what it is. Tommy and I heard the man who was at the store the other day giving directions to some of the Indians in the woods just after sunset. That's why I raced on home and left Tommy with Jean. I think that's all and—and—I guess I'd better sit down. I'm awfully tired."

"Poor darlin'!" Barney held out his arms, but Captain Struthers stopped him.

"All right, Sergeant," he said briskly. "I'll

take care of Miss Marshal. Find Mewhinney, if you can, and meet me at the Lodge."

Barney nodded and was just turning to leave when one of the men who had been sent to watch the store ran toward them.

"Too late, sir," he reported. "They've got the stuff. We found one of them asleep under the counter in the store."

He had hardly finished speaking when a blood-curdling whoop came to them from the direction of the settlement, followed by the sound of many moccasined feet running.

"Hold them, boys!" Barney commanded, "but don't shoot if you can help it! Captain—" But the captain was not there. He was well on his way to the Lodge, Phœbe held firmly in his arms.

He astonished the men on the veranda a minute later by dropping her unceremoniously on the foot of Old Bill's cot.

"Somebody yell for Mrs. Wing! Miss Marshal is about all in. The Indians are on the warpath. Nothing to speak of, of course. Sorry you can't

be in on the fun, but I'll come back later and tell you about it," and he was gone.

" 'Ere's a pretty mess!" Old Bill exclaimed.

"And us out of it!" Alfred mourned. "Tough, I calls it."

"Hi there, Mrs. Wing! Come quick!" Harry shouted. "She's back again, she is, and safe!"

Phœbe sat up and tried to laugh, as the old housekeeper hurried to her. In spite of the strain she was under she realized that the boys must not know the seriousness of the situation. She tried to make little of it.

"Yes, I'm quite safe and sound, but I've had the scare of my life," she confessed, managing a little laugh. "The Indians are acting badly on account of the tanks. They don't understand them so, of course, they are afraid."

"Something like old Fritzie. He didn't take to 'em either,"—Alf grinnned in the darkness. "Wish we was in on the fun—!"

"Where is Captain Struthers?" Phœbe demanded suddenly. Mrs. Wing was leading her

into the house. Once there, Phœbe knew that she would have to rest whether she wanted to or not.

"Oh, he's gone back to have a hand in the scrap," Harry replied. "Trust him not to miss anything!"

For the first time since the early afternoon Phœbe gave way to fear. Would Lucky brave the dangers of the wood to solve the mystery to which she had given him so few clews? As Mrs. Wing pushed her gently down on the lounge, her brain seemed to pound incessantly. She drank some warm milk, and because she was very tired her eyes closed.

The Indians were still making a terrible noise, and the sounds confused her tired brain. Over and over again the same questions repeated themselves. "Was Tommy safe?" "Would Jean die?" "Where was Barney?" "Why had the man in the woods been so particular that no one should cross the old road?" "Would the Indians hurt Mr. Mewhinney?" "Where was Nancy?" And, most insistent of all, "Was Lucky Struthers safe?"

There was a lull in the noise for a minute, and she dozed off, to awake with a start as Barney came into the room, carrying Jean.

"Where's Tommy?" Phœbe demanded.

"Off again with the Captain to follow up that man. We made one of the Indians confess, though it's little good it did us for he would only babble about a boat and a barrel of gasoline and such-like nonsense. He couldn't say where the boat was or anything to give us a clew, and it's my opinion that it was all talk. But the Captain's off to have a look, and I'm joining him when the Indians settle down a bit. Do what you can for this lad," he pointed to Jean—"and when there's any news I'll send some of the boys to tell you. We can't find little Nancy, and Mewhinney is about crazy."

He hurried away and Phœbe stood perfectly still in the middle of the room. She did not attempt to help Mrs. Wing with Jean, for something—a sentence that had come to her out of the dark the night before—was taking shape in her mind.

Suddenly she ran to the door.

"Barney, come back!" she called excitedly. "I remember now!" But Barney was out of earshot.

"What are you going to do?" Mrs. Wing demanded aghast, as Phœbe hastily threw on her heavy coat and snatched her tam from the couch.

"Don't worry about me, dear. I'll be perfectly safe. Do what you can for Jean. I've just remembered something very important that I must tell the Captain." And without waiting for Mrs. Wing's tearful protests, she ran out of the house and across the field toward the camp.

There was an unnatural silence about everything. Up toward the Indian settlement lights still flickered and an occasional shout broke the stillness. Phœbe had no definite plan of action. All she knew was that some way or other she must tell Lucky what she had heard the night before. As she neared the camp, some one called, "Halt!"

A light flashed in her face, and she recognized one of Lucky's men.

"Oh, thank goodness I've found somebody!" she exclaimed gratefully. "Please tell me quickly

where Captain Struthers and Lieutenant Bunce are. I must speak to them."

"They're off in the woods," the guard replied. "There's going to be a jolly old rumpus before long. It's just my luck to have to stay and play nursemaid to these bloomin' baby carriages," he grumbled. "Did you say you knew something?"

Another soldier joined them, and Phœbe looked hard at them both.

"Yes," she said finally, "I think I do. But suppose you tell me just as much as you know. Where is Captain Struthers bound for and what does he think he is going to find when he gets there?"

"Well, as far as I can make out, he thinks he's on the track of a submarine base. That Dutchy has had big stores of oil lugged to the shore by the Indians, and to-night seems to be the date set for Mr. U-boat to call for them."

"And Captain Struthers"—the other soldier took up the tale—"thinks he'd like to give them a little surprise party, but, you see, he couldn't make any of the Indians tell him just where the

base is so they're going to try and find it. They think that if they line out along the coast they'll see a light or a signal or something. No chance," he added, "but it'll be a bit of fun."

Then Phœbe spoke, very quietly, but with so much determination that the two men looked at her first in surprise and then in open-mouthed amazement.

When Captain Struthers decided to organize a searching party to discover where the base was, he cautioned every one to be as quiet as possible. With Sergeant Harding's men and his own, he planned to march as far into the woods as was safe, then to leave most of them to await the signal of the few who would go ahead and reconnoiter. A single line of men were to follow the scouts, to form a connecting link with the main guard, in order to give the necessary signal, for a shot from a gun or any noise would be detrimental to the success of their venture. Tommy, thoroughly tired out but refusing to admit it, suggested that the main body of the men wait in the clearing

where he and Phœbe had picnicked earlier in the day. It was off the main road and made detection a little less to be feared. From there Lucky, Barney, Tommy and three other men crept on toward the coast. Each took a different direction, and was followed in turn by men who kept about twenty paces apart.

It was a brilliant night. The moon and the stars cast a pale white light into the very depth of the woods that made every tree trunk stand out in sharp relief against the dark sky.

"Not so bad, eh, what, youngster?" Lucky whispered, as he and Tommy separated.

"Righto!" Tommy agreed eagerly, if a trifle sleepily. "See you later."

For the next thirty minutes Lucky crawled stealthily forward. In his haste he forgot the men behind him, and when a little later he turned to send back a message he discovered that he had lost them. Nothing was to be gained by turning back, so with the comforting assurance that they could not be very far away he plunged ahead, mindful of many like adventures in No Man's

Land and thrilling once more to the joy of the hunt. He reached the coast and kept on going south. Nothing was visible as far as he could see, and he stopped to listen. No sound came out of the darkness. Lucky stood up and stretched. He was thinking longingly of the pipe in his pocket and had almost decided to risk a smoke, when a hand caught him by the throat and at the same time the cold muzzle of a gun was pressed against his temple.

CHAPTER XI

LUCKY PLANS A SURPRISE PARTY

LUCKY STRUTHERS had been in too many tight places in his very eventful lifetime to give up before it was absolutely necessary, so that when the man beside him told him not to struggle, he replied quite calmly:

"Very well, old chap, just as you say."

For answer, his captor hissed something unintelligible in his ear and indicated that he wished him to walk on.

"What's it all about anyway?" Lucky laughed easily as he spoke. He felt sure that his companion believed him to be alone, and his heart warmed to his task when the thought came to him that perhaps he was being led to the very spot that he most wanted to find.

His guide was not communicative, so Lucky assumed the responsibility of the conversation.

"You know, you shouldn't go about poking people with guns; you really shouldn't. You gave me a nasty start just now. Interrupted me just when I was about to light my pipe too. I say, may I smoke?"

"Non."

"Oh, very well. Of course, old chap, I don't want to appear curious, but where are we going?"

A grim laugh answered him, but Lucky was not easily discouraged.

"Cheerful sort of person, you are," he commented, looking full at the man by his side for the first time. He was a shabby figure, dressed in the meanest of clothes. A worn fur cap almost covered up a tangled mop of black hair, and his head, too large for his ill-shaped body, hung forward on his chest. His eyes were very small and peered out maliciously from under bushy brows. It was an evil face, but there was no cunning in it and not a trace of intelligence. Lucky, regarding it, felt perfectly safe. He quickened his pace, and his guide had a hard time to fit his shambling gait to the long strides.

They must have walked about a mile before they turned sharply to the right. Lucky could not help an exclamation of surprise as he looked at the picture spread out before him. They had come upon a snug little cove. The water was as calm as a mill-pond, for it was well protected from the wind. A low fire was burning under the lee of a big rock, and beside it a man lay at full length. He jumped up as they came near him.

"Have they come?" he demanded. His voice was unmistakably German.

"Non, not yet. On my way I find him." Lucky's guide pointed to him with his thumb, and Lucky bowed.

"Captain Struthers, quite at your service, sir," he said gravely. "Your man found me trying to light my pipe a ways back and he didn't seem to approve."

The German seemed to consider. Lucky saw by the expression of his face that he was undecided just what to do.

"Keep him covered," he said sharply, as the little man relaxed his hold of his gun. Lucky

chuckled to himself at the fear in the voice. If he were only sure that his men were near he would make a try to escape. He weighed his chances and decided it was wiser to wait. The German was still considering his case.

"Sit down! No, stand up," he commanded, "here, before me, and I will tell you what I am going to do." He seemed to enjoy what he was saying, for he rolled his tongue unctuously around each word.

"In a few minutes, from out there to here, will come a boat. Not an ordinary boat but a German submarine, and it will come to here," he indicated the cove with a wave of his fat hand. "On that boat is the Herr Captain Hurtz. To him I will explain your trouble. He will no doubt take you away from here, a prisoner on his boat, and I will receive much honor for your arrest."

If he expected Lucky to show any signs of terror at his threat, he was sadly disappointed. A low, amused laugh greeted it instead.

"Very nice little picture," he said quietly. "Too bad it won't come true."

"Vat you mean?" The German was on his feet in an instant, suspicion in his eyes. "Are there soldiers with you?"

Lucky saw the look and was quick to defeat it.

"Dear me, no,"—his voice was still colorless and level. "But when your Herr Captain and I have had a little talk you will find that he will not take me aboard his little boat as you suggest."

"Ooch, is that all? The conceit of dos English!" The German settled back contentedly.

"Watch him, Jacques. I take a snoze," he directed. "And he is not to sit down." Jacques nodded, and for a long time there was silence.

Lucky, at the sound of his guide's name, tried to recall what Mr. Mewhinney had said about him the day before. "He will give his allegiance to neither England nor France," were his words, and Lucky, as he studied the face before him, was not surprised. His eyes never left the little man's face, for he was biding his time and knew that his only chance lay in taking him by surprise. He listened intently too for a sound that would indicate where his men were. After a weary wait he

was rewarded, but not in the way he had expected. As he stood listening, a low distant rumble, hardly noticeable at first but growing in volume with every second, surprised his ears.

"By Jove!" he said under his breath, and then looked quickly to see if Jacques had noticed it too. He decided that he had not, for his face still expressed stolid indifference. Lucky waited, every muscle tense.

The noise grew louder; there was a sharp crash as if a tree had fallen. Jacques jumped to his feet, but not before Lucky had wrested the gun from his hand. When the German sat up, wakened by the crash, it was to find Lucky smiling above him, Jacques' gun leveled at his head.

"Sorry to wake you, but it seemed wiser," Lucky apologized. "Don't yell, please, for it won't do you any good. Stand over there against that rock, and hold up your hands. Thank you," he added politely as the two men obeyed.

"Vat is dat?" the German sputtered, his thick German accent more pronounced than ever.

Lucky chuckled. "I can't be sure, but it sounds very much like one of my tanks.

There was another crash, nearer this time, and then silence. Lucky never took his eyes from his prisoners, but with his free hand he pulled out his own gun and fired once and waited. The answer came almost immediately, a shot from very near at hand, then a shout.

"Where are you, sir?"

"Turn to your right," Lucky called back. They heard the underbrush crackle under the weight of heavy boots, and two soldiers hurried into the clearing. They saluted Lucky and stood at attention.

"What brings you here?" he demanded.

"Word was brought to us, sir, that the sub was expected at midnight, and that the exact location was two miles below the old road." It was a sergeant who spoke.

"Who gave you the information?" Lucky waited for the answer, his eyes curiously narrowed at the corners.

There was a decided pause before the Sergeant replied.

"The chap that was wounded, sir. He came to and he seemed to know all about it, sir. He said that if that man"—he pointed to the German —"found out you were after them he'd send up a signal and the sub would shell the coast. Lower down, sir, there's quite a little village of Canucks, sir."

"What were you doing at the Lodge?"

"The lady sent for me, sir." The old soldier seemed to be very much embarrassed. Lucky nodded and smiled for the first time.

"Very good, Sergeant. Higgins"—he turned to the other man—"guard these men. Make them keep their hands up and"—he added with a reminiscent smile—"don't let them sit down."

Higgins saluted and covered the men before him in a very businesslike manner.

"Sergeant, get the tank into position down there at the entrance of the cove. Stay inside and be ready to fire at my command but not before. If

possible, I want to take as many of the crew prisoners as I can before sinking the ship."

"Yes, sir." The Sergeant saluted briskly and went back toward the tank. Out of sight of his captain he stopped to scratch his head thoughtfully and the expression on his face was one of dire perplexity.

Lucky consulted his watch. It lacked thirty minutes of midnight. He decided to risk another shot in order to try and locate his companions. His signal was answered from several directions, and one by one and with extreme caution the men found their way to the cove.

Barney was among the first to arrive.

"Glory be!" he exclaimed, standing up and stretching. "What's it all about? I've heard the strangest noises but where they came from I didn't know at all, and—you rascal, you," he said angrily as he saw Jacques and the German, "so this is what you've been up to in spite of the licking I gave you?"

"That's all right, Barney,"—the Captain

laughed. "He'll have lots of time to repent of his misdeeds. I haven't time to explain everything just now, but you're just in time for the jolliest little surprise party I ever staged. In about ten minutes we should see a periscope out there in the moonlight. It's not the first time I ever saw a periscope in the moonlight, but it is the first time I was ever glad to see one." He paused, and Barney protested:

"What are we to do against a submarine, tell me, sir? It's blowing the coast up they'll be and we helpless!"

Lucky pointed to the tank.

"How did that monster get here?" Barney demanded. "But, of course, 'twas the noise I heard, but being too stupid to understand it. Sure, Captain Struthers, you're a marvel, and it's a grand night we're going to have and no mistake."

Lucky enjoyed the Irishman's bewilderment to the full, but time was getting short.

"Every man down and keep hidden," he ordered. "When they make a landing choose your man and cover him. Don't shoot. I want to de-

liver my prizes whole, if possible. As soon as we have them the tank will fire on the boat. I think that's all."

He walked down to the tank. "Oh, Sergeant," he called. "Did Jean say he knew anything about the signals?" The Sergeant's head appeared in the opening beside the gun.

"There were to be no signals, sir, unless things went wrong. Just the fire, sir, and Jean said to be sure and not let the German or Jacques send off any fireworks, for the boat would know then that there was danger ashore, sir."

"Very good,"—the Captain nodded. "Open up, will you? I want to have a look."

"Oh, sir, I—"

"What the deuce is the matter?" Lucky was quick to detect the fear in the man's voice.

"Well, sir, I told her not to, but she would do it and—" There was no need to say more. The low door opened, and as Lucky crawled in a small soft hand touched his cheek.

CHAPTER XII

THE SURPRISE PARTY

"SERGEANT, what does this mean?" he demanded furiously, ignoring Phœbe.

"Well, sir, you see it was this way," the Sergeant began, but Phœbe interrupted him.

"I think I can explain, Captain Struthers," she said quietly. "After you left I remembered something I had heard last night while I was in the hammock. In my confusion I thought it was only a dream, but in the kitchen it came back to me very vividly that I had really heard that German say, 'Two miles below the old road in the cove.' Naturally I wanted to tell you, but when I went to find you every one had gone except the guards at camp. I tried to persuade them, but they wouldn't believe me quite, so I made them go back to the Lodge with me. Jean had recovered consciousness and he was very much upset. He told us what the Sergeant has already told you, and we

agreed that the only thing to do was to follow with one of the tanks—"

"Well?" Lucky said impatiently.

"Well, that's all," Phœbe replied lamely. "I insisted upon coming too. Your men knew nothing of the road, and I knew I could show them at least part of the way, and besides after all that's happened to-day I had to see it through."

"You have no business to be here, however," the Captain replied coldly, "but of course you'll have to stay, and the tank's the safest place for you. Don't make any noise, please, and don't be alarmed. Nothing can happen to you."

Phœbe's eyes flashed with anger.

"That is quite unnecessary advice, Captain Struthers," she replied, and her voice matched his for coolness and self-possession. "If you would take time to think you would realize that I have quite as much right to be here as you have."

Lucky looked at her in amazement. He had never had a girl defy him before and, contrary to all expectations, he found himself rather enjoying the sensation.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered, and would have said more had not a warning whisper from the Sergeant reminded him that he must return to the stern business at hand.

"All right, Sergeant; wait for my signal," he said as he left. "And remember, nothing is to happen to Miss Marshal."

"I understand, sir," the Sergeant replied gravely.

By the time Lucky had returned to his men a periscope was plainly visible gliding toward them on the water. They waited in breathless silence as it bobbed and ducked and finally disappeared. Then the deck of a boat rose quietly from the water and put in for the cove.

It was only a question of seconds after that before the party, that Lucky had boasted of, began. Six men left the boat and made their way stealthily up the shore toward the fire. When they reached it, its dull light illuminated the faces of Lucky Struthers, Tommy Bunce and Barney Harding, their guns drawn ready to meet them. One of the men attempted to shout, but a hand from the

darkness silenced him. Lucky fired, and at the signal the tank emitted a short bark, followed by another and another. Something in the water seemed to snap like the top of a drum, there was a moment of almost perfect silence, and then a queer gulping noise as the submarine sank to the bottom.

"By Jove!" Tommy was the first to speak, his breath was coming in quick gasps, and when he was sure no one was looking he mopped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Very decent, Captain. I congratulate you, and I'm much obliged to you for inviting me to your party. Sure, 'twas a grand success." Barney chuckled grimly. "And now may I ask what you are going to do with those pretty dears you have."

Lucky shrugged his shoulders. He was disappointed. He had expected at least a show of resistance. He looked at the men before him and sighed. Finishing his apology to Phœbe seemed infinitely more important than their fate at that moment.

"Oh, take 'em back to camp," he ordered, "and keep them under heavy guard. I'll wire headquarters in the morning." He indicated the men who were to take charge, and turned to Tommy.

"Better ride home in the tank; you look a bit fagged," he said. "There's a friend of yours already there waiting for you. Come along, Barney; there's room for us on top."

When they reached the tank, Lucky spoke to the Sergeant:

"Lieutenant Bunce will take us back. You can leg it with the rest. That's the first of the punishments in store for you. Now go along with you, or I may be tempted to compliment you on that shot."

The Sergeant grinned broadly. He knew Lucky, and his final giving in to Phœbe had been based on that knowledge.

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir," he saluted, and hurried off to join his comrades.

Lucky knocked on the door of the tank. "Oh, Miss Marshal," he called. Tommy and Barney looked at him in blank amazement.

"Phœbe here!" Tommy exclaimed.

"It's past belief, so it is. Of all places and she a girl. It's wrong entirely." Barney was completely baffled.

Lucky laughed. "Perhaps she can explain," he said as Phœbe, trying to look very dignified and failing utterly, appeared, framed in the low doorway. Her hair was ruffled and her eyes sparkled. She looked far more like a rebellious child than the quiet nurse in charge of a convalescent hospital.

"There's nothing to explain," she said coldly to Lucky. "Tommy, you and Barney can surely understand why I had to come?" She appealed to the two men, completely ignoring Lucky.

"Well, rather," Tommy agreed. "It was no end plucky of you. Tell me, didn't you feel a little queer when you knew we'd sunk her?" He pointed to the water.

Phœbe nodded. It was too dark for them to notice the traces of tears still visible around her eyes. It had been one of the hardest moments of her life when the Sergeant had reported that the boat was down.

"Of course I wanted you to sink it, every scrap of it; but, oh, Tommy, it was awful to think of all the men on board. I hate them. They're Germans, but they were alive such a little while ago and now—" Tears choked her voice, and she stopped.

Lucky looked at her in troubled silence. Barney tried to comfort her, but Tommy, because he was very young also, nodded his head and patted her hand in perfect understanding.

There was little conversation on the way home. Nerves had been strained to the breaking point, and the reaction followed. Only Lucky whistled and pretended indifference. Tommy paid strict attention to driving the tank. Phœbe cried softly to herself.

"To-morrow it will be like a nightmare," Barney observed. He had to shout to be heard above the roar of the engine. Lucky nodded and lighted his pipe.

"Did Mewhinney find Nancy before you left?" he shouted back.

Barney shook his head. In the excitement he had forgotten little Nancy.

The first light that welcomed them when they left the old road and came out into the clearing was the light from the Lodge. Phœbe looked at it with grateful eyes. The noise of the tank had made her head ache nearly to bursting and she wanted to rest above everything else in the world. To-morrow would be time enough to think over all the strange happenings of the day.

A guard met them at the crossroads with a lantern. In its uncertain light Phœbe nodded to the three men beside her.

"Good-night," she said rather forlornly. "Captain Struthers, if I was in the way I am very sorry. Please don't punish the Sergeant. I made him promise to let me go before I would give him my news, so it was really all my fault," she added, looking at Lucky and trying to smile. There was a queer little catch in her voice, and she hurried away before any one of them could answer her.

Lucky stood for a minute and watched her as her white dress disappeared into the shadows of the early dawn.

"Go back to camp, Bunce, and see that the prisoners are being properly guarded and then turn in," he directed. "I'm going down to see if there is anything I can do for Jean. If he's conscious, I'd like to ask him a few questions. Good-night, Barney."

"Good-night, Captain," the big Irishman replied. "I'll see you in the morning. Sure I'm off now to see if the baby's been found."

"I say," Tommy interrupted, "if she hasn't, let me know, will you?"

"Boy, it's enough you've done this day. Go home and sleep," Barney advised, and Lucky nodded in agreement.

"I'll see Mewhinney before I turn in," he added. "I haven't a doubt Nancy's found."

They separated. When Lucky reached the Lodge he found Phœbe at the door waiting.

"Nancy's lost," she said. "I didn't know. Oh, Captain, we must do something."

Lucky looked over her shoulder into the kitchen. The Factor was sitting in a big chair, his face in his hands, and Mrs. Wing was crying softly in the corner behind the stove.

"They've been searching all night," Phœbe explained.

"And Jean?" Lucky asked.

"Better. He's out on the porch with the boys." As Phœbe spoke a bell rang.

"Come with me," she said, beckoning; "that may be he now." They hurried through the house. It was Harry's voice that greeted them as they reached the veranda.

"What is it, dear? Have you been coughing?" Phœbe whispered.

"No, miss; it's the Canuck," Harry explained. "He's saying all sorts of things in his sleep, and I think he wants you to listen. I heard you and I thought maybe you'd want to know."

"Of course, what is it, Jean?" Phœbe bent over the cot next Harry's, where Jean lay struggling for breath.

"My little Nancy lost," he whispered. It was

a terrible effort for him to speak, and Phœbe bent her head very low over his pillow to catch what he said.

His words were scarcely audible, but she understand what he meant.

"Oh, Lucky, come, quick!" she exclaimed, without waiting to explain. She dragged the Captain down the veranda steps and ran as fast as she could toward the lake. Well off from the house, but protected by a clump of trees, a rudely constructed little house that looked like a dog kennel caused her to stop. She dropped on her knees, hesitated for an instant and then stood up.

"Lucky, you look. I'm afraid," she admitted. "Jean said to look here, and, oh, please, find her," she finished excitedly, as Lucky thrust his head into the opening.

"Nancy," she heard him say, and a second later he stood up, Nancy sound asleep in his arms, one little hand clutching a tuft of soft woolly brown fur.

CHAPTER XIII

OLD SMOKE'S PROPHECY

A WEEK later Billiancourt had settled down to its quiet life. Every one had told his tale of the never-to-be-forgotten night, and by the time the Captain had made up his report all the loose threads had been gathered up and a concise story possible.

The German prisoners had been hurried to Quebec the following morning, and except for the absence of Brother Ballou and the white bandage around Jean's head, the whole affair seemed, as Barney had predicted it would, a terrible nightmare.

The Factor had played an important part in quieting his Indians while the rest had been in the woods. What method he used, he never divulged, but the result proved its efficiency, for the

women returned to their places and worked industriously, and the men, though they grumbled a little, went on with their boatmaking. Even the tanks were no longer objects of terror or even interest. They rumbled and crawled grotesquely through the woods, followed by curious groups of little Indian children. Barney Harding left the first part of the week with his troopers, and Lucky and Tommy settled down to camp and the uncertain waiting for orders with as much patience as they could muster. They felt perfectly at home at the Lodge or at the Factor's house, and Nancy, now that Barney had gone, divided her time between Jean and her newer idol, Lucky Struthers. Tommy and Phœbe were together much of the time, although Phœbe felt that she had in a measure neglected her boys and spent a good part of each day on the veranda devising ways and means to pass the dreary hours for her patients. There were impromptu plays, where the talent, all drafted from Captain Struthers' company, made up in good will what they lacked in costumes and scenic effect.

The result was that when the Doctor made his weekly visit to the Lodge he found the boys so cheered in spirits that he complimented Phœbe on the success of her efforts and left her with a warm and happy feeling around her heart.

It was not altogether Phœbe that had worked the change, for a week had made a great change in the weather, and warm, sunshiny days could now be depended on, and the promise of green things to come was being fulfilled by the tender buds that every day appeared on the trees.

The Indians talked among themselves and eyed the rough structures of their canoes jealously. The men of the tank corps were restless and eager to join their comrades in France Tommy Bunce sang marching songs as an accompaniment to all his tasks, and even Lucky, veteran soldier though he was, felt the need to laugh and be gay.

One day, a little after noon, he finished his work and with no definite plan strolled down to the Lodge. He found Phœbe standing on the top step of the veranda, listening to Nancy, who as usual had something very important to tell. The big

glass door was open behind her, and the boys were enjoying her story greatly, to judge by Alf's hearty laugh and Old Bill's rumbling chuckle.

Lucky saluted, and Phœbe put out her hand in greeting.

"Nancy has just been telling us about Old Smoke, that very old Indian woman that always has a pipe in her mouth. Perhaps you've seen her?" she explained.

Lucky laughed. "Oh, yes, I've seen her," he admitted. "I've even tried to talk to her, but apart from noncommittal grunts I can't say the conversation progressed very far."

"Well, she'll talk to you now," Nancy interrupted. "She's seeing things. Oh, she's awfully excited, and they just can't hold her down. She's rolling around on the floor of her hut, and there just never was such a noise. All about black times and only a little ray of the sun and, oh, deary me, a lot of silly nonsense. Granddaddy won't let me listen to her. I wish he would, because sometimes she talks about me and I like to know what she says. But he won't," she fin-

ished, with a characteristic shrug, copied from Jean, and she walked off toward the lake without another word.

Lucky looked up at Phœbe and smiled, then he settled himself comfortably on the step and she sat down beside him.

"What's it all about?" he inquired. "Little Nancy talks enough, but it isn't always easy to follow her meaning."

"Did you ever hear such a chatterbox?" Phœbe laughed, her eyes on Nancy as she stopped to investigate a bird's nest. "The child just bubbles words, and sometimes there is no meaning to what she says. She's an adorable youngster though, and I love her."

"I can't blame you," Lucky said, "for I'm uncommon fond of her myself. But what do you suppose all that nonsense was about Old Smoke?"

"Why, Mr. Mewhinney told me something about her," Phœbe explained. "She's a curious old character, nobody knows how old she really is, but it's a venerable age, and being a chief's daughter she is really the head of the tribe or would be

if the old order still existed. As it is, the man with the most money does what little governing there is, and Old Smoke sits at home and remembers the past and now and then she glimpses into the future."

"Oh, I see; and the fit that Nancy was describing just now is necessary to the glimpse."

"Well, I suppose so. The Indians have perfect faith in her, and Nancy said there was a ring of them around her hut now asking her questions. Even Mr. Mewhinney admits that she's a wonderful weather prophet and has been known to tell the exact results of a hunting expedition even to the number of skins that were brought back."

Lucky stood up. "It seems to me that she is much too interesting not to see," he said. "Come for a walk with me, and we'll see if we can't get a glimpse of her."

"All right," Phœbe agreed. "But you must promise not to laugh or say anything, because the Indians wouldn't like it."

"Naturally not," Lucky agreed. "I'm not going to have a laugh but to be interested."

"There's Tommy. Shall we invite him to join us?" Phœbe asked, but Lucky shook his head.

"Not if you don't want him to laugh," he said. "Tommy always laughs at the wrong time."

"Then let's skip out the back door," Phœbe suggested.

They went through the house and ran quickly across the fields, feeling very much like two naughty children trying to escape their nurse.

When they reached the Indian settlement it was an easy matter to find Old Smoke's hut, for it was the center of a group of men and women, each one trying to see over the other's shoulder. The object of their excitement, if excitement it might be called, was the figure of Old Smoke, lying on the floor, and every now and then giving voice to a low, inarticulate moan.

All that was civilized and up to date about Lucky Struthers came to the fore, and he edged his way to the outside of the circle. He was very angry.

"The woman's dying!" he said excitedly to Phœbe. "The very idea of these people standing around and not doing anything. It's an outrage.

Here, let me pass, will you?'' he said to a big passive Indian who turned and looked at him and then very deliberately blocked his way with one massive shoulder. Lucky was about to grab him by the back of his neck, when Phœbe's hand detained him. Lucky was not in the habit of being stopped and he turned to her in surprise.

''Don't do it, Lucky,'' she said earnestly. ''Old Smoke has a time like this every so often. I know just how you feel. I was ever so shocked the first time I saw her this way last winter. But you mustn't interfere. Really you mustn't. Mr. Mewhinney wouldn't like it, I know.''

Lucky nodded and turned to go, but as Phœbe started to follow him one of the Indians touched her on the shoulder.

''She want speak you,'' he said gravely.

Phœbe looked at Lucky. ''Shall I?'' she asked.

''Yes. I'll come with you,'' he said; ''perhaps she really is sick and wants to tell us about it.''

The Indian led the way to the hut, and they followed. When Old Smoke saw them she stopped rolling around and sat up. With a brown

twisted finger she pointed straight at Phœbe's face and rumbled something.

"What does she mean?" Phœbe was so frightened that she was almost in tears.

Moonflower, who was kneeling beside her, looked up and smiled.

"She say to you come much great joy," she whispered shyly.

"But I don't understand. Can't we do something for her?" Phœbe protested. She looked about her helplessly. A big Indian's sullen eyes met hers and in very terror she fled from the hut, and Lucky had to follow.

"Oh, Lucky, I'm terrified," she confessed when they were out in the sun again.

"Steady there," Lucky comforted her clumsily. "Of course you are, and it's all my stupid fault. I shouldn't have suggested going to have a look at her. Why, child, you're trembling. Come over here and sit down."

"Oh, it's nothing," Phœbe protested. "And of course it's all nonsense, but I do wish she hadn't singled me out."

"Well, be glad she was so cheerful,"—Lucky laughed. "She might have foreseen bad luck, and that would have been much worse."

They were both silent for a minute, and then Lucky added very gently, "I wonder what the much great joy will be."

Phœbe turned and smiled up at him slowly, but her reply was cut short by the untimely arrival of Tommy and Nancy.

CHAPTER XIV

GOOD-BYS

"OH, Phœbe," Nancy began, "just never anything but horrid things happen here any more. Lucky and Tommy are going away, and we won't have any more fun, and I don't see why, when we're all so happy, the old general has to send for them, and if I had him here I'd just tell him so. You don't think I'd dare, but I would, and—oh, Lucky, please don't go."

"What's up?" Lucky questioned Tommy as he drew Nancy down to his knee.

"Orders from headquarters, sir," Tommy explained. "We start to-morrow and join the main guard at the junction where we entrain."

"For?" Phœbe caught her breath as she asked.

"France or I'm much mistaken." Tommy pounded the fist of one hand against the palm of the other and executed a right-about face on one heel.

"Hm, I wouldn't be too hopeful," Lucky said quietly. "I've had orders that sounded like that before. I've even gotten as far as the pier and then marked time for a while and turned around and found myself in the very place I started from. Never be sure, my boy; it's the last thing that will get you to France."

"Well, if they ever get me and Old Grumpy"—that was the name of Tommy's favorite tank—"as far as the pier, I'll go to France if I have to rig up a sail and go over under my own steam," he announced.

"Oh, Tommy, would you?" Nancy was round-eyed and credulous. "And do you think you could take me too? But of course you're joking," she rebuked, as she saw the amused smile on Lucky's face.

"Not a bit of it," Tommy hastened to deny the charge. "And I'll tell you what, Nancy,

here's a promise. If I go over in Grumpy, I'll take you along."

Nancy looked at him in scorn, then she kissed Lucky's big brown hand.

"I do love you, Lucky," she said gravely, "and I do wish you didn't have to go away."

"Oh, Tommy, that's too bad," Phœbe exclaimed, laughing. "Never mind, if Nancy doesn't love you I do, and I'll go to France with you."

"Thanks awfully," Tommy sighed and tried to look very crestfallen.

"Nancy, you're a fickle baby,"—Lucky laughed, "but go right ahead loving me because I like it. Are you going to write to me when I go to France?"

Nancy frowned. She was only seven, and her education had been limited. She could write, for Rab Mewhinney had taught her how, but she did not pretend to enjoy it.

"I don't think I'd have very much to say," she replied seriously. "Now that you're gone, there won't be very much fun except when Barney comes and Granddaddy'd be sure to read my let-

ter. He always does, you know, and then it would be just like a lesson because he'd be sure to find a lot of words that were spelt a little bit wrong and then I'd have to write them ten times each and I don't think I'd like that very much. Perhaps Phœbe would write to you," she suggested, brightening at so simple a way out of the difficulty. "Would you?" she asked, looking at Phœbe.

Lucky hastened to answer, while Tommy laughed.

"That's a very good idea, Nancy, but I want letters from you too. I think if I asked Granddaddy he'd let just your letters to me come through uncensored."

"Here comes Mr. Mewhinney now." Phœbe pointed down the road where the Factor was in sight. They all got up and started slowly to meet him.

"So you're leaving us," he said as he reached them. "I'm sorry for that, for we shall miss you, but of course we know how eager you are to be off. Your boys are as pleased as though they

were children promised a great treat. I overheard two of them telling Mrs. Wing out under the big tree what they are going to do when they got to France. I think, Tommy, that it's your particular machine they've chosen to drive up to the palace at Berlin."

"Grumpy will be grateful." Tommy laughed. "But who knows," he added seriously; "we may do even that."

"What was Mrs. Wing doing?" Lucky inquired.

"Crying over them, and at the same time making them promise to send her souvenirs, bless her kind heart," the Factor replied.

"Oh, dear,"—Nancy had been quiet for as long as possible—"I do wish Moonflower would decide to go away just for to-night," she said, "then we could have another jolly party and cook it over the fire and everything just as we did before."

"Without Lucky's corn bread," Tommy whispered to Phœbe.

"Why, child, we can have a supper over the logs without Moonflower's going,"—the Factor laughed; "but perhaps there's too much to do at

camp to-night?'' He looked inquiringly at Lucky.

''Not a thing,'' Lucky assured him. ''Give us an hour and we will be at the house. By all means we must have a farewell supper.''

''Well, if there's to be a supper party I must hurry back to the house,'' Phœbe said. ''I've lots to do.''

''Are you going to take Harry's temperature?'' Nancy demanded. Phœbe nodded. ''Then I'm going with you.''

They went on to the Lodge, while the men returned to camp. Phœbe told Mrs. Wing about the proposed supper.

''I'll mix up a little corn bread for you then, for the Captain dearly loves it,'' she said eagerly. ''You'll be missing their company, won't you, dear?'' she went on. ''They're brave lads, all of them, and Mr. Tommy, was there ever such a tease I wonder? And to think of him fighting and in one of those heathenish contraptions! Some of his boys were telling me that they expected to go to Berlin in one of them. Well, good luck to them, say I. I can only hope they give the

Germans as big a fright as they did me the first time I saw them."

"Bless their hearts,"—Phœbe laughed. "I suppose every company that ever crossed was as sure as they are of being the first to enter Berlin. Do you remember Phil's boasting?"

Mrs. Wing looked up sharply. Phœbe's voice had trembled as she said her brother's name.

"Indeed I do, my lamb, but some of them must be the first, and I've a queer feeling these lads will get there. What a lot of store they put in that one man Captain Struthers. They think there's no one like him alive, and of course he is just splendid. What friends we've grown to be, and now to think they're going over there maybe never to return—" The tears, never very far from the surface, ran down Mrs. Wing's ruddy cheeks and splashed unnoticed on to the table.

"Oh, please, dear, not to-night!" Phœbe begged, a catch in her voice. Mrs. Wing was repentant at once.

"There, there, my dear," she said softly. "Not another word, I understand." But Phœbe, as she

hurried into the other room, knew that she did not for she was only just beginning to understand herself.

It is difficult to try and repeat a good time, and the little party that sat around the Factor's fire lacked something of the spontaneous merriment of the last gathering. Perhaps the thought of the next morning and the good-bys that must be said cast a cloud. Nancy at any rate was frankly disappointed and welcomed the arrival of one of the Mounted Police with eagerness.

He was an Irishman, like Barney, and another pet of Nancy's.

"Hello, Michael!" she greeted him. "I'm so very glad you came; we weren't having a very good time and now you can make us laugh."

The Factor pulled up a chair and introduced the rest. "Do join us, Michael,"—he added his welcome to Nancy's.

"Oh, if I only could, but it's the saddle for me to-night," Michael replied. "We're out after a man and we ought to have him before morning."

"Oh, is he near here?" Phœbe demanded.

"He is not, if he were I'd have a bite with you. Is that real corn bread I see, or am I maybe dreaming?"

"No, it's real corn bread, and you must have some," Phœbe insisted. "If you are in such a terrible hurry I'll wrap it up in a napkin for you and you can eat it on your way."

"Now that's sweet of you, but like you entirely," Michael replied.

"Must you hurry away this minute?" the Factor inquired as he picked up his hat. "Man, you've just come."

"I know, but I'm off and, oh, before I go, I suppose I might as well tell you why I came. That man Jacques got away from the military authorities and they can't find him anywhere, and they won't until they send us after him, begging your pardon, sir,"—he bowed ever so slightly to Lucky, "for 'tis sure he took to the woods, knowing them the way he does. If you see him around here you might let me know and now I'm off, and with the corn bread. Thank you, my dear." He

bowed very low to Phœbe as she handed him the parcel and with a nod to the rest he was gone, Nancy with him to see him get on his horse.

The rest of the evening was taken up with memories of Jacques and speculation on his escape. Tommy left early after making Phœbe promise to write to him, and Lucky was left to see her home.

They did not have very much to say as they walked along the road under the stars, for they were both busy with their thoughts. When they reached the path that led to the Lodge Lucky stopped and held out his hand.

"Good-by, Phœbe," he said gravely. "You have been very kind to me, and I am certainly no end grateful. Before I go I want to say that I'm awfully sorry if I was rude that night I found you in the tank. I was staggered you see and—well—"

Phœbe laughed. "Yes, I see. You didn't think I should have come to your party without an invitation."

"Well, that is what I thought more or less,"

Lucky admitted, "but, you see, I never bothered to realize that really it was as much your party as mine. Of course I see now and—well, I'm awfully glad you came. You brought us luck."

Phœbe laughed in spite of herself. "I'll forgive you for not being glad to see me," she promised "and now good-by and the best of luck, or I should say your usual luck."

"And you've forgiven me for scaring you to death to-day by taking you to see Old Smoke?"

"Indeed I have. I really rather enjoyed it. I wonder what that prophecy meant? Nothing, I guess, and now good-by again."

They shook hands, and he watched her until she was in the house. Then thinking of the prophecy, he said aloud to the darkness above him,

"Well, whatever it is, I wish I could have something to do with it."

CHAPTER XV

THE LETTERS

"'As pretty Polly Oliver sat musing 'tis said
A comical fancy came into her head;
Nor father nor mother shall make me false prove,
I'll 'list for a soldier and follow my love.'"

"PHŒBE, dear, whatever are you singing?" Nancy demanded, as Phœbe, looking down into the blue water of the lake, hummed the words of the old English ballad.

"Oh, just a funny little song I used to know when I was about as big as you are," Phœbe replied. "It's about pretty Polly Oliver who had a sweetheart who went to war and she was so lonely for him and missed him so much that she dressed up like a soldier and enlisted one day, and when she got to France she found him, wounded and lying on the battle-field, and the Sergeant sent for the parson and they were married and they lived happily ever after."

"Was he a captain?" Nancy asked demurely.

"No, he was just a plain soldier boy, but Polly didn't care, she loved him anyway."

"But wouldn't she have loved him harder if he'd been a captain?" Nancy insisted.

"Now you're being silly," Phœbe said briskly. "Come along with me. I see your Granddaddy down the road and he told me he wanted to talk to me about something. We'll go and find out what it is."

They walked back to the Factor's house slowly, while he explained painstakingly what the trouble was.

"I'm just a plain old man, ye understand, and I never had overmuch time to think of the lassies even when I was young. If my wife was wearing a bonny new ribbon, I'd notice it, but the ordinary clothes"—a quizzical expression lightened his gray eyes for an instant.

"I understand," Phœbe replied. "You're worrying about Nancy. Let me help. Where do you usually buy her things?"

"I sent for them by mail, and there was a very

kind woman who always took care of my order. But yesterday I heard from the store that she was dead, and though of course they sent me a very respectful letter and a catalogue full of pictures, I don't know just what to do. If you would help us out, lassie, we'd be very much obliged, Nancy and I."

"Of course I'll help; it will be lots of fun. We'll look over the catalogue and mark the things we think are best, she'll want warm things for winter is not so very far away. Mr. Mewhinney, where do you suppose the summer has gone?" Phœbe asked the question with genuine wonder in her voice.

For it was true. The summer had indeed slipped away, one day so like another in its peaceful monotony that they lost track of time. The only events were the letters from overseas that came all too seldom.

"It should have dragged by," Phœbe went on, "for we've had nothing to keep us busy, but somehow it hasn't."

"It isn't things to do that make time fly," the

Factor said gravely, "it's your thoughts. If they're busy, then hours don't count. Dreams, lassie, day dreams keep you young and give wings to time."

Phœbe looked deep into the gray eyes beside her and nodded.

"You're a very wise man, Mr. Mewhinney," she said with a little laugh as they entered the house.

The next hour was devoted to a thorough inspection of the drygoods store catalogue. At first Nancy was interested, but when the dresses were selected and she was asked to give her opinion on shoes and stockings she openly rebelled.

"Oh, Phœbe, dear, what's the use of fussing?" she demanded crossly. "Tell them to send me a pair of boots that won't wear out. I'm going to find Jean. He promised to teach my new bear a trick, and I don't want him to forget it." She danced off, to return in a very few minutes with Sergeant Harding.

"Here's Barney," she announced gayly, "and I want him to see the picture of that dress with the sash. Please show it to him, Phœbe."

Phœbe turned to the picture, and Barney studied it with exaggerated interest.

"Sure, darlin', it's beautiful. What color is the sash to be?" he inquired. "Now I do hope you're going to say green," he added earnestly. It was not the first time that he had been called upon in consultation over Nancy's wardrobe and he was much more up on style than the Factor.

"No," Nancy giggled—"it's going to be blue. I really wanted pink, but Phœbe thinks blue is nicer with red hair."

"Blue?" Barney considered the question. "Well, if it can't be green then blue would be me next choice."

The Factor looked on and chuckled. "Did you bring us any news, Barney. I hope you did."

"Letters," Barney replied, opening his wallet. "I stopped the mail train, knowing full well that the Queen and I could be here long before it, though the engineer wouldn't agree with me when I pointed out the fact. There's a letter there from Captain Struthers, I think, and several for you, Miss Phœbe."

"Oh, read Lucky's first," Phœbe said, putting hers in the pocket of her sweater. "Mine won't be interesting."

The Factor took out his glasses, polished them carefully and not until they were comfortably settled on the wide bridge of his nose did he open the important envelope.

"Dear Mr. Mewhinney (he read):

"That last letter of yours was more than welcome, for it found me very down on my luck. Bad news does not improve with keeping, so I will be out with mine. Tommy Bunce was badly wounded in our last attack and was taken prisoner. It's the greatest loss to the company for you remember how the boys liked him, even up in Billancourt and over here he proved himself such a fine soldier that they were all united in their praise and love for him. If he had not been wounded I would have faith in his ability to escape, but in the condition in which I last saw him he had little chance even to live. I know how you will all feel about it, but the war goes on and

men are suffering and dying all around us. The war seems to have become a mode of life over here. As you see I am not in my usual spirits to-day. Tommy's loss has gotten under my skin. I miss the youngster more than I thought I could.

"My very best regards to Phœbe. I know my news will upset her. A kiss for my little Nancy and to you and Barney a shake of the hand. I wish I could see you all to-night.

"Sincerely yours,

"Lucky Struthers."

When Mr. Mewhinney stopped reading there was a long silence. They were all trying to realize the news they had just heard.

"Tommy!" Nancy said at last, and threw herself into Phœbe's lap in a passion of tears.

Barney walked over to the window and stared out into the sunshine.

The Factor took off his glasses and polished them methodically.

Phœbe's hand stroked Nancy's head gently. None of them spoke, for there was nothing to

say, and silence is the greatest tribute to sorrow.

"Read your own letters, lassie," Mr. Mewhinney said at last, and Phœbe nodded. She fumbled in her pocket and brought out an official looking gray envelope.

"It's from Colonel Padgett," she said listlessly as she tore it open.

For a minute she read without a change of expression, then her eyes flashed and she drew her breath sharply and a little muffled cry broke from her lips. She handed the letter to the Factor.

"Read it," she said.

"My dear Girl (the Colonel wrote):

"Try and prepare yourself for a shock for I have had news of the utmost importance from one of our base hospitals in France. Before I tell you what it is I must warn you against putting too much hope in my words for if only disappointment is in store for you, and I cannot promise that it may not be, the shock would be more than you could bare.

"A man answering to Phil's description is very ill in one of my friend Dr. Jepson's wards. He was returned with some other prisoners not long ago. There is no way of identifying him for he is out of his mind. Dr. Jepson suggests that you come over yourself. I have given the matter much thought and I think you will do well to take his advice—"

The Factor did not finish the letter—"Lassie, lassie," he said brokenly, and Phœbe found herself held tight in the big comforting arms.

CHAPTER XVI

TO FRANCE

PHŒBE left Billancourt the next day for Quebec, where Colonel Padgett met her. He could give her little definite news, but the fact that he thought it necessary for her to go to France gave her hope.

There were endless days of waiting for a passport, and before the final arrangements were made a month had passed, so that when Phœbe at last boarded the ship at Halifax it was well on in September.

The trip over was long and very tiring. The boat took a devious course and made very poor time, so Phœbe thought, as she paced the deck and tried to pierce the gray fog for a sight of land. At night they ran with all lights out, and for the most part the passengers sat about the salon and talked of submarines.

Phœbe, had she chosen to tell the story of the night in the woods at Billancourt, could have been the center of attention, but she kept to herself, as the Colonel had advised, and mixed little with the ship's company.

It was a very foggy morning when they at last stole into the slip at Liverpool. A leaden sky and a misty drizzle blurred the outlines of the pier, and only a dismal bell that jangled in the distance welcomed them to England.

Phœbe watched the landing from the first deck, and a forlorn feeling stole over her as she followed the steward down the gang-plank. The Colonel had assured her that a very great friend of his would be there to meet her, but, apart from knowing that his name was Dr. Blythe, she knew nothing about him. She would have given anything she possessed in the world to see Mrs. Wing or Rab Mewhinney.

Her guide led her to the entrance of the pier, where, before she was allowed to pass through, her passport was once more carefully scrutinized by a tired-looking official.

Once beyond the gate, the noise and confusion of the traffic made her stop to take time to get her bearings. She tipped her steward and was just about to ask a question of the imposing Bobby, who was regulating traffic from the middle of the street, when a voice, very clear and ripply, said:

"But of course that's Phœbe, Dad. I know it is."

Phœbe turned to see who had spoken, and found herself looking into a pair of laughing blue eyes.

"You are Miss Marshal, aren't you? I'm Alice Blythe, and this is my father. We've come to take you back with us." A smile as winning as the eyes followed the remark, and Phœbe found herself shaking hands.

"How do you do?" she said. "I'm so glad you found me, for I was so confused I didn't know just where to begin looking for you."

"We tried to get a pass for the dock, but the rule seems to be unbreakable," Dr. Blythe explained. "I'm sorry you had a chance to be worried, but apart from a tall, very striking looking girl, Padgett neglected to tell me much about you."

He smiled, and when Dr. Blythe smiled people usually felt flattered and contented all at once.

"The dear old colonel is a bit vague sometimes," —Alice laughed—"but, as the American boys say, 'The gang's all here,' so let's hurry, Daddy, for I know Miss Marshal is hungry and tired."

"Cricket means she's hungry, and you're tired, my dear," the Doctor said, as he helped them into the waiting motor.

They had a substantial meal, and Alice made her guest feel that far from being a trouble to meet her it had been a treat.

"Won't you tell me what your uniform is?" Phœbe asked, as they drank their coffee. "I've been very curious, but I haven't liked to ask."

"Oh, I'm just an ambulance driver out of a job,"—Alice laughed. "I came home on leave a month ago and I'm waiting for orders to report somewheres, sometime."

"You mean you've been over to France?" Phœbe demanded, and Alice nodded.

"Near the front?"

Another nod.

"Oh!" was all Phœbe had to say.

"You won't think that when you've been there yourself. Even the trenches are like everything else when you get used to them," Alice said. "And, by the way, I suppose you are very anxious to know when you start. Dad's been tryin' to get your passage booked for the Channel, but you know it's uncommon hard to hurry anything these days."

"That's very good of you, Dr. Blythe. I can't thank you enough for all you've done for me." The trite words sounded very sincere as Phœbe said them.

"Nonsense, my dear," the Doctor said kindly. "I only hope your trip will be all that you hope. And now, come along, or we will miss our train."

It was not until they were comfortably settled in the big London house that evening that Alice brought up the subject again. Mrs. Blythe had said good night and left the girls in Phœbe's room together. She had made Phœbe welcome on her arrival, insisted on her goining to bed early, and

then, because she was very wise and understood girls, she had left her to Alice.

"Tell me something?" Alice said very seriously. "How do you feel about going to France?"

"Oh, I don't know."

Phœbe had wanted her to ask the question but it was difficult to answer. "I want to go more than anything else in the world but I'm frightened to death."

Alice considered for a moment and she eyed Phœbe narrowly.

"What of?" she asked at last. "The war?"

Phœbe looked a little hurt. "Why, no," she said quietly. "I wasn't thinking of that. You see, Dr. Jepson is not sure that this man is my brother, and if I find he isn't—"

"I knew you were a thoroughbred," Alice announced triumphantly, "but I had to be sure. You might have been afraid, you know, of just the guns—plenty of girls are. Now tell me something else. Do you want to go alone or would you like me to go with you? Tell me quite honestly."

"I'd like you to go with me," Phœbe answered promptly. "Would you?"

"Of course I will. I know the way about and I really can make things easier for you traveling, but I didn't like to just take it for granted that you wanted me. I'll go down now and tell Dad to hurry things so that we can start soon. You go to sleep and don't dare to worry." And without giving Phœbe a chance to reply, she slipped from the room, closing the door gently behind her.

It was a week before Dr. Blythe announced that everything was settled and they could sail. So on a never-to-be forgotten Tuesday they left England in a gayly camouflaged boat for the shores of France.

"I hope Peter can meet us," Alice said a little wistfully. "I haven't seen him for ever so long. Peter's my cousin," she explained.

"Oh," Phœbe laughed. "I thought from the way you spoke that he was something else."

"Well, he's that too," Alice confessed. "Silly, isn't it? But somehow it just happened. I didn't

want to fall in love during the war, but Peter would have it, and now I think of him when I ought to be worrying whether my tires will see me back to the hospital and such things."

"What branch of the service is he in?" Phœbe asked.

"Aviation. He's been decorated, and—oh, well, he's altogether wonderful, and I really am most awfully gone on him!" Alice laughed at herself. "Funny the way you are always meet-people over here when you least expect to. If you have any particular friends that you want to see, you must tell Old Michael their names, and if they're in finding distance he'll have them in to tea the next day. Michael is Dr. Jepson, you know, and on this side of the Channel he's a most important person. At home we can't seem to take him seriously. Personally I adore him."

"I think I ought to too,"—Phœbe smiled a little sadly. Of course I do know lots of boys over here," but where they are I haven't the least idea. I would like to see Lucky Struthers though—"

"Goodness, gracious me!" Alice interrupted. "Do you really know *the* Lucky Struthers?"

"Why, yes, we were quite good friends before he left," Phœbe admitted modestly. "I like him ever so much."

"Like him? Why, he's the most romantic character in the war! Anyway he's my pet of all our heroes. Why, the things that man has done! Even Dad gets excited when he reads about him. He's with the tanks and doing simply wonders now. Last week he received another decoration. Michael knows him and he told me, when I begged to meet him, that he didn't like girls." Alice paused and then added suddenly, "I say, are you the reason?"

"No, of course not," Phœbe denied hotly. "Lucky and I are just good friends. His company was in camp at Billancourt where I was, and we—oh, we just used to see each other now and then."

"Billancourt? Why, that's the place where the —yes, I remember now—the submarine base was

found and one of Captain Struthers' tanks blew up a submarine. Were you there when it happened?"

Phœbe smiled. "Why, yes, I was," she replied.

"Did you see anything of it?"

"Yes, a little."

"Well, tell me about it," Alice demanded. "Where were you when it all happened?"

"Oh, I was in the tank." Phœbe answered quietly.

Alice shook her. "Wretch! You tell me every word or I'll never forgive you!"

The story lasted until they landed at the dock in Calais, where Dr. Jepson was waiting to meet them. Alice saw him from the boat and waved.

"I'm very glad you are here, Miss Marshal," he said, when he had met Phœbe. "I sent over for you a long time ago. You know, I knew your older brother Don very well, and I am almost as eager to find Phil as you are."

"Dr. Jepson, you couldn't say anything that I'd rather hear," Phœbe replied.

"I say, why isn't Peter here?" Alice demanded.

"You promised he would be, and, oh, Michael, what do you think? Phœbe is a pal of no less a person than Lucky Struthers."

"Don't be slangy, Cricket," Michael corrected. "And tell me something I don't know. I was talking to Lucky day before yesterday and he told me a lot about Miss Marshal that I'll bet you don't know."

"Oh, but you're jolly well mistaken, for I shook it all out of her on the way over."

They were crossing a number of car tracks as Alice spoke and Phœbe, because she was embarrassed, was watching a group of workmen who were lifting a box from a car. As she watched them, hardly thinking of them, one of them looked up, saw her and shuffled quickly out of sight.

CHAPTER XVII

UNIDENTIFIED

DR. JEPSON led the way, and Phœbe, trembling in every limb, followed. Down long wards, lined on either side by white cots and each one bearing mute testimony to a duty done, they threaded their way.

They were in a hospital that had been under fire of the German guns and was even now in constant danger of air raids. But in spite of everything there was a cheery brightness about it that defied discouragement and brought hope. Phœbe could not help thinking of the much quoted phrase of the Tommy, 'If the stretcher bearers find you, you're all right, matie. They just won't let you die back at the hospital.' She did not stop to speak to any of the patients, though she would have given anything to have delayed for a little that one moment that was to mean so much.

Michael Jepson understood and he did not hurry her, but at last they reached a door and he paused before it.

"Would you rather go in alone?" he asked gently.

"Please," Phœbe nodded. He opened the door, and she passed into the room.

Just what happened behind that closed door no one ever knew, for Phœbe never spoke of it. Dr. Jepson knew that she was in the room for several minutes. When she opened the door, her face was very white and she leaned up against the wall for support. Michael put out his hand to steady her and waited.

"He is not Phil," she said in a strange little voice.

"I'm sorry," Michael said softly, and he led her back through the wards again to his office. Alice was waiting for them, and there was an officer with her. They stood up as Michael opened the door. There was no need to ask questions for the answer was written in tragic lines on Phœbe's face, but Michael shook his head sorrowfully.

Phœbe tried to smile. She lifted her head high, for she was determined to be brave, and found that the man before her was Lucky Struthers.

He came toward her clumsily and held out his hand. "Phœbe, I'm sorry," he said, "but you mustn't be discouraged. There are many more unidentified men in France, and one of them must be Phil."

This time Phœbe really did smile. "Thank you, Lucky. It's awfully good to see you here and—now—and I promise not to be discouraged."

"I said she was a thoroughbred," Alice whispered, "and now I know it."

"Let's go out of doors. The smell of hospitals always make me feel gloomy. I suppose it's because I've never been in one and I don't appreciate them."

"Never in a hospital? Why, I thought—" Alice began.

"Oh, my arm? That was back in the first days and we didn't indulge in such luxuries then," Lucky explained. "I was in a hut on a stretcher for one night, and when the Doc. came to me I told

him I wanted a regular bed. He looked at me and told me that the best thing for me to do was to get well and then go and find one, and he added that when I found one I might let him know where it was hidden. That discouraged me where hospitals were concerned, and I went back to the trenches. They were a lot more comfortable."

Lucky's little story gave Phœbe time to regain her self-possession, and when he finished she said,

"I think it would be better to go out too. I want to see all through this wonderful place. It makes the Lodge look very tiny beside it, but not just now."

The Doctor nodded. "Good. We'll leave you in Lucky's care then, for Alice and I have a good many things to do. Cricket has adopted sons scattered all through France, and some of them are here. She'll have to say hello to them before she leaves, and I'll have to make the rounds, for I'm substituting for Harding to-day. The train for Fleurette does not leave until six." He led them out through the big hall and opened the door for them.

"Thanks, old man," Lucky said. "We won't be long. Well, little Phœbe, it does seem strange to be with you so far from Billancourt," he added as they strolled along the driveway.

"It is sort of sudden, isn't it?" Phœbe admitted. "I can hardly believe I am really here."

"Perhaps you are dreaming in the hammock and you'll wake up to hear Nancy telling you one of her wonderful stories—the kind she always began in the middle and finished by tying both ends up. Funny little Nancy. How is she?"

"She was just the same as ever when I left, but I feel as if I had been away for years. She was perfectly sure I would see you and sent you quantities of love and some very long messages which I am afraid I have been careless enough to forget." She looked up at him and smiled. "We have often laughed at Nancy but she had a way of very often being right," she added.

"Well, let's be grateful she was this time," Lucky replied.

A whistle, sharp and shrill, made them stop suddenly to listen. It was repeated three times.

"What's it mean?" Phœbe demanded.

"An air raid," Lucky told her shortly. "Wonder where you'd be the least nervous? Cellar, I suppose. Come along."

"But I don't want to go in the cellar," Phœbe protested. "Surely we're safe enough out here. Let's watch it."

Lucky looked at her inquiringly. "Oh, very well," he agreed. They sat down on the grass and waited. Alice joined them, and a few minutes later Michael.

"Two enemy planes with one of ours in pursuit," he reported.

"Fairly matched according to German standards," Lucky remarked as he lighted a cigarette.

They watched the sky intently and after a minute or two they could just make out three small spots a little to the right and very far above them. They came nearer and nearer, until it was plain that they were airplanes, and Alice and Lucky and Michael were able to tell which were the German ones and which their own with the aid of Lucky's field-glass.

"Don't waste them on me," Phœbe said as Michael offered them to her. "I can't tell a thing. Just let me know what's happening."

"We're on top!" Alice exclaimed excitedly. "Look, Michael! he's got one of them!"

"No, not yet! That was just a dip. Hello! Oh, that's tough! Can't you see what they are trying to do?"

"Give me the glass.

"Wait a minute. He's getting away. Here."

"Of course he sees what they're trying to do. Watch him get on top again."

"Oh, where are our guns?"

"Wait, they're too high yet."

Phœbe listened and kept her eyes fastened on the spots. She had never been so excited in all her life. The planes changed places and with every new move Alice grew more impatient.

"Michael, don't tell me they're out of range now," she said

"They're not. Listen!" Lucky held up his finger.

From the hill above came a series of short quick

Very swiftly one of the planes fell.

sounds, like a typewriter played very quickly. Two of the machines seemed to hesitate and then they rose higher.

"Now!" Alice cried. "Oh, don't let them get away!"

Lucky was looking through the glass. "Ha!" he ejaculated and handed them to her. "They won't. That was very prettily done. One wing, I think. Watch."

Very swiftly one of the planes fell. Phœbe watched it and held her breath. Would it never reach the ground, she wondered. She turned to Lucky. He was not even looking at it. His eyes were intent on the two that were still in the sky. They were coming nearer them every minute.

The German plane flew higher and they waited, tense.

"Don't look, Cricket! I'm afraid he's got us."

"Give me those glasses," Alice demanded. "He has no such thing! I told you—oh, do look! He's in a tail spin! Will he be able to come out of it? There, he's righted himself! Now watch!"

Their plane rose just as the German dipped in pursuit supposedly. There was a puff of smoke, and Phœbe knew it was all over by Alice's face. From excitement her expression relaxed, and she smiled and shrugged her shoulders. "Told you so," she said.

Michael looked at Phœbe.

"Well, what did you think of it?" he asked.

"Do you think there'll be another this afternoon?" Phœbe asked, her eyes sparkling. There was no mistaking what she meant, and they all laughed.

"Were you frightened?"

"No. Should I have been?"

"We were in danger; considerable danger," Michael emphasized his words.

Phœbe seemed to consider. "I suppose so," she said at last, "but it didn't seem to matter much."

Lucky chuckled contentedly to himself.

CHAPTER XVIII

JACQUES LEVAL

"WELL, I can't see that we are so very uncomfortable," Phœbe said, as they settled themselves in the train carriage. "I think this is a lark. Lucky told me we would be quite miserable."

"Well, we haven't started yet," Dr. Jepson reminded her. "The carriage may fill up and it may be very unpleasant."

"Tell you what. I'll pretend I have smallpox," Alice suggested. "Michael can be my doctor and you my nurse, or would fits be better?"

They were all in the train that, according to the station master and the time table, was to leave at six and arrive at Fleurette at about midnight. The officials, however, begged to remind the passengers, in a neat little card pinned to the door, that they were not responsible for delays.

Dr. Jepson was taking Phœbe to Fleurette because there was a case there that might prove to be Phil—a young boy, quite out of his mind, that the Americans had found hiding in a cellar in one of the little French towns they had recaptured. He was being cared for at the American hospital, and Michael had heard of him in his search for Phil.

"After six now," Alice said, "or else the station clock has stopped. Look at your watch, Michael."

"Why? Time is so very unimportant, dear Cricket, what good would it do you to know that we were half an hour late in starting? None in the least, and besides I'm much too comfortable to move." Michael settled himself in his corner and unfolded a French paper.

"For all the world as if you were just running up to London," Alice said as she looked at him. "Phœbe, have you a watch? Mine's broken, as usual. It never did run. Michael gave it to me. I simply must know the time."

Phœbe consulted the tiny jeweled watch on her

wrist. "It's six forty-five by mine," she replied, "but of course I may be a little fast."

"Which you probably are not," Alice said forlornly. "In about an hour, if we are very lucky, we may start—"

"But don't let that distress you. We'll be sure to stop before we've gone very far," Michael remarked from behind his paper.

"Tell me something about this hospital we are going to. Lucky said they had a great collection of heroines there. What did he mean?"

"They have,"—Alice laughed. "It's really very strange that so many girls who have all done things—big things, I mean—should all be in the same place, and now you're going too."

"Oh, nonsense! I haven't done anything," Phœbe protested. "But tell me about the rest."

"Well, to begin with, there's Missy. Her real name is Helen Carey and she is an American and just about the finest girl I ever knew. She works as hard as ten men and never gets a bit cross. Before she came over she had a thrilling experience with a spy back in America and stopped a

troop train and saved her brother's life, and a lot of other things that would make you shiver to hear about. But you'd never know it to talk to her. She's very quiet and stunningly good looking. Then there's Valerie, a little French girl. She is a dear, really. She cut off her hair and enlisted and had no end of a time before they sent her to us. She talks all the time—"

"Like some one else I could mention." The newspaper rattled importantly.

"Michael, please don't be rude. I told Phœbe this morning that you had charming manners," Alice remarked severely. "As I was saying, you won't have any difficulty in making Valerie talk. Then, last but not least, there is Marieken, a little Belgian that saved my brother's life when he was in the German lines and did so many remarkable things that you would never believe could be done by any human being. Some day I'll make that big brother of mine tell you some of them. He'd rather talk about Marieken than about anything else in the world."

Michael put down his paper. "You forgot to

add that she runs the entire hospital and every one in it. She wears three decorations, Miss Marshal, and when she stamps her foot even I am scared."

"Gracious, is that all? I'm beginning to be very nervous. Think of meeting so many important people all at once! There aren't any more, are there?"

"Not now," Michael replied.

"Which one do *you* like best, Doctor?" Phœbe inquired.

"Oh, Alice didn't bother to mention her," Michael replied. "She's a little English girl, and she once drove an airplane back to the lines and delivered a message that was of the gravest importance. She broke her ankle doing it, so they sent her home and she had to amuse herself catching spies. Of course, as Cricket will tell you, she really didn't do a thing worth making so much fuss about, but I still maintain that she is my favorite."

"Oh, I think she'd be mine too!" Phœbe exclaimed. "Is she there now?"

"Not at this particular moment," Michael replied, a wealth of meaning in his voice.

Phœbe glanced sharply at Alice, to discover that she was blushing furiously.

"Why, he means you!" she said. "And you never told me, and you let me talk for hours about that silly old tank!" Phœbe looked very reproachful.

"Oh, Michael exaggerates," Alice said coolly. "He's known me since I was a mere infant, and he's prejudiced." The train gave a lurch. "Cheero! I do believe we're off. If you people will excuse me I think I'll make a try at a nap. We're going to have the carriage to ourselves, which is a blessing. Wake me up when you decide to eat." She snuggled against the very soiled upholstery and, like all people who have worked for long hours and learned to sleep any way, she was soon dozing.

It was not long before Michael followed her example, and Phœbe was left to herself and her thoughts.

She tried to keep her mind from dwelling on

the disappointment of the morning, but it was more than she could do, for she had built up her hopes in spite of warnings, and to have them crumble in a minute had been almost too much for her tired nerves. In future, she promised herself, she would have no hopes. If Phil were found— Her heart quickened at the thought. In her heart she tried to believe him dead.

From Phil her thoughts traveled to Fleurette and Alice. What girls they must be! She wanted to meet them. What was it Lucky had said about them? Something about her adding to the fame of the place. That was silly, of course, but it was awfully sweet of him to say it. Her thoughts having found Lucky, did not wander farther, and she recalled her afternoon with him until she dozed off too.

A noise, terrific and shaking; a blinding flash, the grinding of brakes, a jar, a crashing and splintering of wood! Then oblivion.

Phœbe opened her eyes slowly, for they hurt her. She was lying on a roadway, dazed and shaken. She sat up slowly and looked about her. The

train was a mass of wreckage and lay twisted and smoldering not twenty yards away. She stood up and tried to walk, but after a minute she gave up and lay down on the ground. Around her people were moaning and calling feebly for help. Here and there some one walked for a little. A voice that she recognized as Michael's called her name, but she could not answer. She heard Alice say, "All right, but I'm dizzy."

She closed her eyes and waited. They would find her sometime. She tried not to worry. Then she heard Michael call again and summoned all her strength to answer. He heard her and came over to her.

"I'm not hurt; just my head feels queer," she said, struggling back to complete consciousness. "What happened?"

"A plane dropped a bomb on the track. Missed us, but not by far. We were in the last carriage and came out of it better than the rest," he explained. "If you are all right I'll go and see what I can do for some of the others."

"I'll come with you." Phœbe got up again and swayed unsteadily. "Where's Alice?"

"Seeing what she can do. She's not hurt, and I left her a minute ago trying to bind up a woman's head. You'd better rest," he said gently.

"No, I'm really all right," Phœbe insisted. "Don't worry about me. I'll do what I can."

She made her way slowly to the wreck, trying to regain her courage. A child cried and she ran to it.

For an eternity she seemed to be comforting and trying to relieve the suffering around her. She did not see either Alice or Michael. In a daze she bound up a head here or tried to ease a broken limb there. She worked her way up to the front of the car where the damage had been the greatest. A woman called to her. She was suffering terribly, and Phœbe took her hand. There was nothing she could do for her, for it was too dark to see. The stars were out, and dawn was not far off. She sat down, her hand still held in the con-

vulsive grasp, and waited. Every little while she would call Michael, but he was evidently still down the other end of the train.

At last the dawn came, objects took shape and shadowy outlines cleared. Phœbe looked at the woman beside her and noticed for the first time that her head was resting on another body. She leaned over to look at it and a startled scream broke from her, for the face was Jacques Leval's, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

CHAPTER XIX

MISSING

PHŒBE waited long enough to make sure that the man was dead before she hurried off to find Michael. Her discovery might not be important, but she could not rest until she had told him. She found him with Alice. They were doing what they could for a soldier who had been badly injured. Phœbe dropped to her knees beside them.

"Dr. Jepson, I've just found a man that was arrested in Canada as a spy," she said, trying to use as few words as possible. "Before I left I heard that he had escaped. Will you look at him? There's no mistake. I know the man," she said firmly, as Michael looked at her incredulously.

At the positive note in her voice he got up and prepared to follow her. They reached Jacques'

body, and Phœbe pointed to his peasant's jacket. "Perhaps you'd better search him," she said.

Michael nodded and went through the pockets carefully and collected an old pipe, a knife, a pocket book with quite a good deal of money in it and a tobacco pouch.

"Nothing here," he said, "but I'll take off his shoes. They sometimes carry messages there." He removed the heavy boots and threw them aside. Phœbe picked one of them up. It struck her that they were new—suspiciously new—for shoes are hard to buy in war time. She looked at the two together. There was a difference in the soles. Without quite realizing what she did she opened the big knife and split one of them.

"Look, Doctor!" she said excitedly. "Here's a paper."

Michael took it from her and examined it.

"I can't make anything out of it," he said, frowning, "but we must get it to headquarters as soon as we can."

They returned to Alice and tried between them to think of some way.

"You can't leave these people," Alice said. "That's out of the question, and I think my ankle is broken again. I didn't say anything about it because it doesn't hurt much but I couldn't walk on it."

"I can take it, if you tell me where to go." Phœbe stood up. Michael and Alice looked at her and then at each other.

"Follow this road in the direction we came from. It turns to the right and another crosses it. Wait there until a motor lorry or something comes along and picks you up. Tell them you must get to some one in command at once; that you have important news. Don't admit that you have a paper on you—" Michael stopped. "That's all. The rest you must decide for yourself."

Phœbe slipped the paper in her shoe.

"That sounds simple enough," she said, managing to laugh a little. "I'll send some one to help you too," she called back over her shoulder as she hurried away.

It was a long walk to the crossroads, but Phœbe

trudged straight ahead, and a little after ten o'clock she reached it. A tumbled-down sign-post pointed south and west. On one board some one had drawn a caricature of the crown prince with something in French written under it. Phœbe read it and laughed, then she sat down to wait. Before very long she heard the welcome noise of an approaching motor. She sprang to her feet and looked eagerly down the road. A cloud of dust was moving toward her rapidly. She waved her arms excitedly, but the big gray motor lorry did not slow down and before she realized what had happened it was well past her. Tears of anger came into her eyes.

"I'll stop the next thing that comes along if I have to be run over to do it," she said aloud. But such drastic measures were not necessary. Before very long an automobile came in sight, and to her delight it slowed up at sight of her. When it came to a standstill beside her, an officer leaned over the side.

"What is it?" he demanded curtly.

Phœbe explained. The officer said something

to the man beside him and then opened the door of the car.

"Come in," he directed.

"But the wreck and Dr. Jepson?" Phœbe protested.

"They sent help from the junction before we left,"—the other man spoke for the first time, and Phœbe climbed obediently into the car. The officers made room for her.

"Now, tell me all over again," one of them commanded. "Just what is your message?"

Phœbe looked at them. One was a colonel, the other a major, and she decided that her paper would be quite safe in their keeping. She took it out of her shoe and handed it to the Colonel.

He ordered the car to stop long enough for him to examine it. In silence he passed it to the Major, who whistled as he read it.

"Caught at last, by jove!" he ejaculated.

The Colonel turned to Phœbe. "I'm sorry, Miss Marshal, but we will have to take you with us. There is no time to take you back to Dr. Jepson." He signaled for the car to go on.

Phœbe folded her hands and settled back against the cushions.

The car went at a breakneck speed that made conversation impossible. Through towns that were in ruins, up hills and down, around corners still at the same speed. They rode for about two hours, and all that time Phœbe heard a far rumble that sounded like thunder. They seemed to be getting nearer to it all the time. At last the unevenness of the road made them slow up a little, and she looked ahead. Lines of motor lorries were ranged along one side of the road and farther on she saw a number of tanks. The car stopped and the officers got out.

"Come this way," the Colonel beckoned to Phœbe, and she followed him along a path that led up to the top of a hillock. They went down a tiny flight of steps on the other side and entered a dugout that was cut into the side of the hill. A table, a chair and a cot were all the furnishings. Phœbe eyed the cot longingly.

The Colonel gave some directions to the Major, and then followed her inside.

"I don't want to be inconsiderate, Miss Marshal, but will you please tell me all you can about yourself and why you are here?"

"Certainly, sir," Phœbe replied quietly, and did her best to make her story as clear and concise as possible. When she mentioned Colonel Padgett, her questioner held up his hand.

"Can you describe the Colonel?" he asked.

Phœbe laughed.

"I can try," she said. "He is very tall and very thin. His nose is—well, it is large and it *is* hook-shape, really. He has a funny little way of saying, 'yes, yes,' to everything and of never quite being definite. You think very often that he is not listening to what you say, but he is and—well, I think that's all except that he likes to play cribbage and just hates to lose."

"That's quite enough." The Colonel laughed heartily for just a minute, then he said seriously:

"And now if you're not too tired perhaps we can find you something to eat. I'm sorry I had to bother you with questions, but you brought a

rather important paper and I had to be sure about you."

An orderly appeared at the door. "Major Blake's compliments, sir, and I am to report that Captain Struthers and two of his men have been missing since this morning, sir. His tank penetrated the German lines and has not returned."

The Colonel jumped up. He was only just in time, for Phœbe had fainted.

CHAPTER XX

OLD SMOKE'S PROPHECY FULFILLED

IT was several hours before she regained consciousness. When at last she did open her eyes, the Colonel was standing in the doorway of the dugout, a field glass to his eye. A terrible sound seemed to fill every corner of the room. Phœbe put her hands to her ears and tried to shut it out, but it roared through her fingers and pounded against her brain.

She tried to speak, but her voice was lost in the thunder. She sat up and looked about, conscious of a gnawing hunger. A piece of bread and a slice of cheese were on a chair near her. She ate it all. She was becoming used to the noise and after a minute or two she joined the Colonel in the doorway. Before her, but many feet below, a line of tanks were crawling slowly forward toward a wood. She watched them curiously. Every now and again one would drop out

and lie still, a huddled mass in a mire of mud. She was still dazed and nothing she saw seemed to matter very much. Lucky was dead, that was all her tired brain could grasp.

Suddenly the Colonel took a step forward and held the glasses closer to his eyes. Phœbe, conscious that something was happening, looked intently at the line below her. All the tanks had stopped. They were not moving and they were not firing. She looked beyond. From out of the woods a tank was coming toward them, very slowly but very surely. When it was abreast of the others they went forward again, but it continued to advance in queer, unsteady jerks toward home.

"One of our captured tanks has gotten away," the Colonel said to himself, but Phœbe heard him.

"It's Lucky! I know it is!" she exclaimed. The Colonel turned to look at her, started to speak, but thought better of it. He put his glasses back into their case and hurried down the hill, Phœbe following him closely.

The tank was in plain view when they reached the level, and Phœbe could see that the roof and sides were covered with men, holding on for dear life as it plunged and reared. They joined a group of shouting men and waited.

The tank stopped at last and its passengers tumbled to the ground. But Phœbe was not watching them; her eyes were riveted on the low doors. One of them opened presently, and Lucky stepped out. The men cheered, and the Colonel ran to him and slapped him on the back. In the excitement Phœbe was forgotten. She got behind a pile of sand bags and buried her head in her hands. Glad tears trickled down between her fingers and she sobbed unrestrainedly.

It was Lucky who discovered her a few minutes later and carried her back to the Colonel's dugout.

"Phœbe, dear, open your eyes, please," he whispered as he laid her gently on the cot. Phœbe looked up at him and smiled.

"Oh, Lucky, I'm so happy," she said softly, and without another word she fell asleep.

She was completely exhausted and she did not

open her eyes again until late the next morning. When she did open them, Lucky was the first person she saw.

"Better?" he asked. "How about a little breakfast?"

Phœbe could only smile in reply. There was a lump in her throat that warned her that the tears were still very near the surface, and she did not want Lucky to see her cry.

He understood her smile and called to an orderly who was waiting at the door. He hurried away, to return in a few minutes with a pot of very strong tea and a piece of dry bread.

"Not a very royal spread," Lucky apologized, "but it's the best we can do. As soon as you're feeling better the Colonel's car will take you back to the hospital. You'll find a friend of yours there waiting for you," he added significantly.

"Oh, Lucky, tell me who?" Phœbe demanded.

"Sure you can stand some good news?" he asked gently.

"Of course."

"Well, then, what would you say if I told you

Tommy was safe and sound and very probably sleeping peacefully at this minute?"

"Really? Oh, Lucky, how simply splendid! But tell me how."

"I brought him back with me last night. You know I was supposed to be a prisoner. At least Fritzie thought he had me. So much so, in fact, that he wasn't any too careful about guarding. My captor threw me into a sort of barbed wire pen with a lot of poor chaps that were half starved. Why, one youngster was so—but I mustn't tell you such things just now. The very first man I saw was Tommy. He had a very dirty bandage around his head and he was lying full length in the mud. I went over to him and—"

"Oh, I know how glad he was to see you!" Phœbe interrupted. "Go on."

"You mustn't get excited," Lucky warned, "or I won't be able to finish. He was glad to see me, and I tried to cheer him up, but he was pretty weak. We didn't get anything to eat all day, and I was getting a little bit discouraged when I heard the joyful sound of our attack. I stood by

the fence and waited. I could see good old Grumpy in the distance, and how I longed to get to her. Fritzie was no end surprised at what he no doubt considered our untimely and unseemly behavior. We usually attack at dawn in connection with the infantry, but this time we were on our own and it upset Fritz completely. Besides we had never come in just that direction before and he didn't understand. The German soldiers don't like the tanks anyway, and you never saw such commotion. They ran around in circles, and I saw my chance was coming. I told some of the boys to watch out, and I carried Tommy and this other youngster to one corner. Then I slipped under the wire and under cover of the smoke I got to Grumpy, picked up the boys on the way back, as many as could climb aboard, and started for home. When our men saw me they stopped firing until I came up to them. This upset Fritz some more. When they finally reached the objective they had a pretty easy time of it."

"Oh, Lucky, I never heard anything so wonder-

ful!'' Phœbe sat up, her eyes flashing and her cheeks scarlet.

''I have,'' Lucky said very seriously. ''Finding you crying against those sand-bags was far more wonderful to me than anything else that has ever happened. I could hardly believe my eyes. You see, dear,'' he added tenderly, ''I had been thinking of you all day long and I wanted you—''

''The car is ready, sir.'' The orderly stood in the doorway.

Lucky got up. ''Very good, tell it to wait.'' He turned to Phœbe. ''Time to go,'' he said briskly. ''Let me help you.''

They went out to the car, and just as Phœbe started to enter the Colonel joined them.

''This isn't good-by, Miss Marshal,'' he said, holding out his hand, ''for I hope I am going to have the pleasure of seeing you many more times.''

''Thank you, sir.'' Phœbe took the outstretched hand. ''I am sorry I kept you from sleeping in your own bed, but I don't seem to remember that I had very much to say about it,'' she laughed.

"It has been a privilege to be of even so small a service to you, my dear," the Colonel replied graciously and left them.

Lucky held out his hand.

"Not for long," he said as she squeezed it tightly. "I'll be along to finish out that sentence that my orderly had the bad taste to interrupt, before many days. That is, unless you'd rather I wouldn't."

"Lucky, you know I want you to," Phœbe replied seriously, and as the car started she called back:

"And, oh, Lucky, please make it soon!"

Alice was watching the driveway from the window of Michael's office when several hours later the big car swung into sight, and she recognized Phœbe sitting alone in state on the back seat.

"Here she comes!" she exclaimed joyfully. "Come along, Michael. You've got to help me tell her."

"You'd think, to hear you talk, that you had bad news instead of good to tell her,"—the doctor

laughed. "But of course, I'll come with you."

They were waiting on the steps, when Phœbe jumped out of the car.

Alice took her in her arms and hugged her.

"Oh, Phœbe, we've such wonderful news for you," she whispered.

"I know, Lucky told me. Isn't it wonderful! Where is he and may I see him?" Phœbe replied, thinking of Tommy Bunce.

Michael looked at her, a puzzled expression on his face, but he led the way into the hospital, through two wards, and opened a door into a private room. There were two beds in it. Phœbe stopped on the threshold and looked in. Tommy Bunce was lying in the one nearest the door, but Phœbe, after a joyful little cry, ran past him and dropped to her knees beside the other.

"Phil," she whispered. A very thin and bruised arm encircled her, and a voice, weak but still boyish and very like her own, whispered back:

"Little sister."

Explanations followed swiftly. The look in Phil's eyes told story enough. He had been

picked up eighteen months before by the Germans, and thrown into the place where Lucky had found him. He had tried to escape and been caught and brutally punished. All requests to communicate with his family had been refused, and he had been made to do the hard, beastly labor of the camp until he was too weak to move.

"They were letting me die by slow stages," he finished, "and I certainly wanted to until yesterday. Even when that captain lugged me over to the wire and put me beside you,"—he looked at Tommy—"I hadn't much hope."

"I told you if Lucky was staging the affair we were bound to come out on top." Tommy grinned at Phœbe. "We know, don't we?" she nodded.

"It's most remarkable, and I wish somebody would pinch me," Alice said. "Of all unlikely things, that Captain Struthers should be the one to find your brother!"

"I don't think it's a bit strange. I might have known Lucky would bring him back to me," Phœbe replied happily. She dropped her eyes, and a tell-tale blush mounted to her cheeks.

CHAPTER XXI

CONCLUSION

IT was the eleventh of November, a roaring fire blazed away on the hearth and Rab Mewhinney, with Nancy on his knee, sat in a big chair and watched the flames.

"It's been just ages since we heard from any of them," Nancy complained. "What do you suppose is the matter? I think Phœbe is just mean."

"No, lassie, don't say that," the Factor chided. "We don't know what may have happened. I make no doubt that we will hear before very long."

The room was warm, and it was getting late. Nancy's touseled head snuggled against the big shoulder, and she fell asleep. Rab Mewhinney nodded above it, and after a minute the bushy lids dropped over his tired gray eyes.

A knock at the door woke them both, and they sat up with a start. The door opened and Phœbe,

with Lucky and Tommy and another man in khaki, stood framed in it.

"Lassie!" was all the Factor could say, but Nancy, once sure that she was not dreaming, threw herself in Tommy's arms and shouted with joy.

"Well, here we are, back again," Phœbe laughed; "and this time I brought Phil with me."

Phil, still a little pale but very erect, took Mr. Mewhinney's hand.

"I've a lot to thank you for, sir, and some day when I have you alone I am at least going to try to do it. You've been pretty splendid to my little sister, and I am no end grateful." He smiled.

The Factor wrung his hand heartily.

"Ay, laddie, you'll never know how glad I am this minute to know she'll have you now to take care of her. I tell you it's a great relief. I worried about her, a mere lassie like her, alone in the world."

"Well, sir, you see—" Phil began, but stopped to laugh. "I was glad of that myself, but it seems there was no need for either of us to worry for old Lucky decided to take over the responsibility

for her quite a while ago, and I must say he does uncommon well."

"Thanks awfully, old chap," Lucky replied, and turned to the Factor. "That's not exactly the way Phœbe and I meant to tell you of our engagement, sir, but I suppose it was the best Phil could do."

Rab Mewhinney lifted his hands, but whether in surprise or in blessing it was never known, for at that moment the door burst open and Barney Harding and Jean came in.

"Mewhinney, man, peace is declared!" he shouted, and then stopped at sight of the rest.

The next few minutes were pandemonium, but when the great news was finally realized they sat for a little in silence, all gazing into the fire and each one in his or her own way paying silent tribute to the victorious dead.

Nancy, as usual, was the first to speak.

"Thank goodness that's over!" she said feelingly; "and now let's have supper, and cook it over the fire."

THE END